



## REGULAR OPEN SPACE, ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION, AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION MEETING AGENDA

City Hall - Council Chambers  
4381 Broadway, Ste. 201, American Canyon

**October 2, 2024**  
**6:30 PM**

**Chair:** Tara McClinton-Horner

**Vice Chair:** Scott Artis

**Commissioners:** Barry Christian, Sean Hughes, Nance Matson

**Youth Commissioner:** Vacant

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Tonight's meeting is a limited public forum. American Canyon promotes respectful and responsible behavior among its meeting participants, whether they are present in person or remotely. Using offensive language or remarks that promote, foster, or perpetuate discrimination based on race, creed, color, age, religion, gender marital status, status regarding public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation/gender identification, as well as any other category protected by federal, state or local laws will not be tolerated. In the case of an occurrence, the speaker will be immediately disconnected from the microphone.

### PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Open Space, Active Transportation and Sustainability Commission and other public meetings will be conducted in person. This meeting is also available via Zoom, is broadcast live to residents on Napa Valley TV, on our [website](#) and on [YouTube](#).

**Zoom Link:** [Click here](#). **Webinar ID:** 880 2614 8375; **Passcode:** 123456. **Phone in to Zoom:** 408-638-0968

**Oral comments, during the meeting:** Oral comments can be made in person during Open and Closed Session or through Zoom in Open Session only. On Zoom use the "raise your hand" tool during any public comment period. To avoid confusion, hands raised outside of Public Comment periods will be lowered.

**Written comments:** Submit written comments by the [eComments link](#), located on the Meetings & Agendas page of our website. eComments are available to council members in real time. To allow for Council review of comments, eComments will close at 3:00 pm on the day of the meeting.

The above identified measures exceed all legal requirements for participation in public comment, including those imposed by the Ralph M. Brown Act. For more information, please call the Office of the City Clerk at (707) 647-4369 or email [cityclerk@cityofamericancanyon.org](mailto:cityclerk@cityofamericancanyon.org).

**AGENDA MATERIALS:** Agenda materials are published 72 hours prior to the meeting and are available to the public via the City's website at [www.cityofamericancanyon.org](http://www.cityofamericancanyon.org).

**AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT:** Materials will be provided in appropriate alternative formats to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Please send a written request to City Clerk at 4381 Broadway, Suite 201, American Canyon, CA 94503 or by email to [cityclerk@cityofamericancanyon.org](mailto:cityclerk@cityofamericancanyon.org). Include your name, address, phone number and brief description of the requested materials, as well as your preferred alternative format or auxiliary aid, at least three calendar days before the meeting.

## 6:30 P.M. REGULAR MEETING

CALL TO ORDER

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

### **PUBLIC COMMENT - ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA**

*This time is reserved for members of the public to address the Open Space, Active Transportation and Sustainability Commission on items within their subject matter jurisdiction. Comments are limited to 3 minutes. Comments for items on the agenda will be taken when the item is called in open session. The Commission is prohibited by law from taking any action on matters discussed that are not on the agenda, and no adverse conclusions should be drawn if the Commissioners do not respond to public comment at this time.*

### **AGENDA CHANGES**

### **CONSENT CALENDAR**

1. **Minutes of September 4, 2024**

**Recommendation:** Approve the minutes of the Open Space, Active Transportation and Sustainability Commission meeting of September 4, 2024.

### **BUSINESS**

2. **Newell Open Space Trail Standards**

**Recommendation:** Review and comment on the Newell Open Space trail standards.

3. **Electric Bicycles in Newell Open Space Preserve**

**Recommendation:** Receive and file an update about electric bicycles in Newell Open Space Preserve.

4. **Update Newell Management Plan**

**Recommendation:** Review and comment on the draft Newell Management Plan.

### **MANAGEMENT AND STAFF ORAL REPORTS**

### **ADJOURNMENT**

### **CERTIFICATION**

I, Taresa Geilfuss, City Clerk for the City of American Canyon, do hereby declare that the foregoing agenda of the Open Space, Active Transportation, and Sustainability Commission was posted in compliance with the Brown Act prior to the meeting date.

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Taresa Geilfuss, CMC, City Clerk

**CITY OF AMERICAN CANYON**  
**REGULAR OPEN SPACE, ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION**  
**ACTION MINUTES**  
*September 4, 2024*

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**6:30 P.M. REGULAR MEETING**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The Open Space, Active Transportation, and Sustainability Commission meeting was called to order at 6:44 p.m.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**ROLL CALL**

**Present:** Commissioner Nance Matson, Vice Chair Scott Artis, Chair Tara McClinton-Horner

**Absent:** Commissioner Sean Hughes

**Excused:** Commissioner Barry Christian

**PRESENTATIONS**

There were no presentations.

**PUBLIC COMMENT - ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA**

Chair McClinton-Horner called for public comments. Written comments: none. Oral comments: Land Use & Transportation Planner Patrick Brand, Napa Valley Transportation Authority, was called to speak; Executive Director Kara Vernor, Napa Valley Bicycle Coalition, was called to speak. The public comment period was closed.

**AGENDA CHANGES**

There were no changes to the agenda.

**CONSENT CALENDAR**

**Action:** Motion to approve Consent Calendar made by Commissioner Nance Matson, seconded by Vice Chair Scott Artis, and CARRIED by roll call vote.

**Ayes:** Commissioner Nance Matson, Vice Chair Scott Artis, Chair Tara McClinton-Horner

**Nays:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Absent:** Commissioner Sean Hughes

**Excused:** Commissioner Barry Christian

## **1. Minutes of August 7, 2024**

**Action:** Approved the minutes of the Regular Open Space, Active Transportation and Sustainability Commission of August 7, 2024.

## **BUSINESS**

### **2. Capital Project Updates**

Commissioners received a Capital Project update on Newell Open Space Improvements, Green Island Road Class I Trail, and Wetlands Edge Enhancement from Senior Civil Engineer Ron Ranada, and provided feedback. Chair McClinton-Horner called for public comments. Written comments: none. Oral comments: Kara Vernor was called to speak. The public comment period was closed. No action was taken on this item.

## **MANAGEMENT AND STAFF ORAL REPORTS**

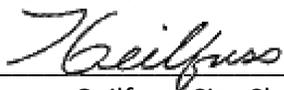
There were no oral reports.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:24 p.m.

## **CERTIFICATION**

Respectfully Submitted,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Taresa Geilfuss, City Clerk



## **TITLE**

Newell Open Space Trail Standards

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Review and comment on the Newell Open Space trail standards.

## **CONTACT**

Alexandra Ikeda, Parks and Recreation Director

## **BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS**

The Newell Open Space Preserve is an agricultural open space property where open and active year-round cattle grazing occurs under a license shared with the adjacent Azevedo and Lynch Canyon properties and is open to the public for passive recreational use. The Preserve will remain in its natural condition to ensure the protection of habitats, wildlife, ecosystems, and biodiversity of the property, and reduce the environmental impacts of trails on sensitive resources, habitats, riparian areas, native and special status plants, and animal species. This special and unique property provides an opportunity for our community to connect with nature and enjoy the beauty of an untouched landscape.

## **TYPE OF TRAIL SYSTEM**

The Preserve's trail system is classified as Class 2, Multi-Use for cyclists, equestrians, and pedestrians. With its moderate terrain, the trail invites individuals of varying skill levels to explore and enjoy the natural surroundings, fostering a shared space for outdoor enthusiasts.

## **TRAIL STANDARDS**

Managing and operating a Multi-Use trail system can be difficult as each activity has its own needs and expectations. Multi-Use trails represent a compromise between the different groups; this compromise can often result in less user satisfaction. The City of American Canyon will make every effort to provide a safe, usable, and enjoyable trail system. However, this balance needs to be consistent with the Conservation Easement.

Trail conditions will vary depending on the time of year, the impact of rain and storms, nature, maintenance, and other resources. The trail system throughout the Preserve will remain in its

natural condition and in some cases, maintenance may be provided by the City of American Canyon to improve the visitor experience and safety. These improvements will not be at the cost of impacting the Preserve's natural environment, protected habitats, and species. Per the Conservation Easement, any work to the property, including the trail system, will require preapproval from the Land Trust of Napa County before starting the work.

### **WEATHER-RELATED CLOSURES**

Extreme weather activity can create resource damage such as trail washout, oversaturation, flooding, and instances of hill slides. This presents a risk to park visitors and a potential need for Emergency Medical Service professionals that can be mitigated by closing the Preserve until conditions are safe to enter and use. The conditions of the Preserve are monitored by City staff; City staff will be responsible for opening and closing the Preserve and may be at the direction of outside agencies like the American Canyon Fire Protection District, Napa County, etc.

- **Wet Weather Closures:** The Preserve may close at any time due to inclement weather. Throughout the year, City staff will utilize the National Weather Services website for predictions and assistance. In cases where the City of American Canyon experiences 1/2" or more of rainfall within 12 hours - the Preserve will be closed. For every 1/2" of rainfall equals one (1) day of closure or unless otherwise noted by City staff. Closure may exceed this formula due to trail conditions.
- **Red Flag Warnings:** The Preserve may close at any time due to a Red Flag Warning. The City, the American Canyon Fire Protection District, Napa County, Cal Fire, and the National Weather Services may issue Red Flag Warnings. The Preserve will be closed for the full duration of the warning and will reopen once the warning is lifted. The minimum standard observed is 80/20/20 (+80 degrees / +20 mph winds / -20% humidity).
- **Air Quality:** Air pollution can cause serious health issues and local air quality can affect our daily lives. Like the weather, air quality can change from day to day and/or be impacted by air pollution, wildfires, and other emergencies. The Preserve may close at any time for an Air Quality Index (AQI) of 101 to 200; the Preserve will remain closed until the air quality improves. The City measures AQI through Air Now.

### **EVALUATION**

City staff will evaluate the condition of the Preserve's trail system throughout the year, and in some cases more frequently than normal due to the weather. If any time, a trail or a portion of a trail is deemed unsafe or unusable, the City will close all or some portions of the trail system. Depending on the nature of the damage, City staff will go through the proper process and channels to address and mitigate the damage. However, the City's goal is to conduct routine maintenance throughout the year to help minimize resource impacts.

- **Trail Inventory:** To manage the maintenance needs for the Preserve, City staff will create an

inventory of the physical assets of the trail, including features along the trail like signage, seating, and special trail features. This inventory will be kept up to date on an annual basis.

- **Seasonal Inspections:** City staff will inspect the Preserves trail system and cross-check the inventory list on a seasonal basis: Summer, Fall, Winter, and Spring - with a minimum of four times a year. Additional checks may be conducted as needed. Work Orders will be a result of any issues, defects, or needs observed during these inspections.
- **Prioritize Maintenance:** Routine maintenance will be scheduled on a seasonal or annual basis depending on the scope of the work. Outside the City's normal protocol, work will be prioritized from Low Priority, Medium Priority, High Priority, and Emergency.
  - *Low Priority:* Tasks and work that need to be done but are not vital to the day-to-day operations. These tasks and work might include non-critical repairs.
  - *Medium Priority:* Routine or preventative maintenance schedules. These tasks or work will affect operations eventually and need to be performed to maintain optimum production.
  - *High Priority:* Will directly affect operations now or in the future.
  - *Emergency:* Take priority over all other work and require immediate danger of life, health, safety, security, or operational damage to the Preserve.

## **ROUTINE MAINTENANCE**

- **Trail Maintenance Window:** Maintenance to the Preserve will occur from March to November of each year - dependent on weather, and state and local regulations.
- **Grading and Maintenance Windows:** Grading will only occur during the dry months (generally May 15 through October 15), when associated erosion will be reduced to the maximum extent possible. Grading to the trail system will only occur on an as-needed basis.
- **Invasive Species:** Invasive species can be relentless. They can lead to the extinction of native plants and animals, destroy biodiversity, and reduce and alter wildlife habitats. The spread of invasive species negatively affects the environment, and the health and safety of humans and animals. The Preserve has several invasive species we try and address throughout the year, however, our most common problem for visitors is the various thistles that can be found. These pesky plants pop up from November into August. To mitigate this issue, City staff will address the thistle along and in the middle of the trail on a seasonal or bi-annual basis. Tactics may include blading or dragging the trail, grazing, and/or utilizing a safe herbicide spray for wildlife and cattle.

- **Conservation Grazing:** Livestock grazing is a science-based management tool used to maintain grassland habitats, promote the growth of native plants, and reduce wildfire risk. The City has a Grazing License with the Azevedo family for the upper portions of the property known as the Grazing Pasture. This grazing method is year-round or continuous with minimal restrictions and occurs simultaneously on the adjacent Azevedo property and Lynch Canyon Open Space. Additional grazing methods may be used on the lower portions of the property, outside the Grazing Pasture throughout the year. This type of grazing may occur along the Preserve's trail system, picnic, and barn areas.
  
- **Mowing:** The California Department of Fish and Wildlife biologists define "bird nesting" season from February 1st through August 15th. Mowing will typically occur during the trail maintenance window from March through November. The purpose of mowing is to thin and manage vegetation along and on the trails. Before mowing, City staff are required to coordinate a Biological Bird Survey with a third-party company.
  - *Negative Survey:* If the City obtains a Negative Survey, the City has two weeks to mow the surveyed area. Once mowing starts, the project must continue until it is completed; work cannot start and stop - work must be continuous. If at any time, City staff stop the project and need to return - a new Biological Survey must be obtained, and all work must stop until the new survey is found to be negative.
  
  - *Positive Survey:* If the City obtains a Positive Survey, the City is not permitted to mow and must wait the required time before re-filing a new Biological Survey.
  
- **Brushing:** When brush grows or is forced in the trail corridor, trail damage often occurs when trail users are forced off the established trail tread and onto the berm. The removal of all living or dead vegetation from the trailway will occur on an as-needed basis for resource protection, safe trail access, and the protection of the trail.
  
- **Trail Layout and Tread:** The placement of gravel as a surfacing material on and in the trail tread produces a long-lasting trail tread surface. To ensure the sustainability of the multi-use trail, the City may add crushed rock aggregate to strengthen the trail tread with a minimum of a 3-inch layer of gravel which will be the full width of the trail.
  
- **Rolling Dips Inspections:** The City of American Canyon partnered with Napa County Resource Conservation District (NCRCD) to install rolling dips in 2019 throughout the Preserve's trail system to reduce road-related sediment delivery via landsmart features to improve water quality, habitat, and riparian improvements by reducing erosion from the trails. The City has agreed to maintain this project for 10 years by taking the following actions:
  - Allow site inspections by NCRCD at the end of each rainy season and measure the

project through water quality monitoring and photo documentation.

- "Road Surfaces", i.e. trails will be checked annually before the rainy season (October 15th of each year), and after major storms for major alterations due to erosion or settling. Check to ensure that rolling dips are functioning to disperse runoff from the trails and not causing erosion at their outlet.
- The City shall not remove or grade out any of the rolling dips through the monitoring term.
- Notify the NCRCD within 7 days if conditions develop that may require significant repairs.

**Next Steps**

This information will be integrated into the update for the Newell Management Plan.

**COUNCIL PRIORITY PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS**

Outdoors and Recreation: "Expand opportunities for use of outdoor recreation and an active and healthy lifestyle."

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Not Applicable

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

Not Applicable

**ATTACHMENTS:**

None



## **TITLE**

Electric Bicycles in Newell Open Space Preserve

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Receive and file an update about electric bicycles in Newell Open Space Preserve.

## **CONTACT**

Alexandra Ikeda, Parks and Recreation Director

## **BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS**

On July 15, 2024, the City formally requested approval from the Land Trust of Napa County (Land Trust) to allow recreational use of Class 1 electric bicycles (e-bikes) in Newell Open Space Preserve (Attachment 1). On August 1, 2024, the Land Trust responded (Attachment 2), confirming that recreation biking on the property is "conditionally consistent with the intent and terms of the conservation easement." They noted no significant difference between traditional pedal mountain bikes and Class 1 e-bikes.

To comply with paragraph 4.7 of the Conservation Easement, the City is committed to updating the 2001 Newell Management Plan, specifically Part Two, Sections B and C to ensure that management, maintenance, and operational standards support the passive recreation use on the property. This revision will also include updates to public use guidelines, the introduction of new rules, and the implementation of seasonal maintenance practices. City staff are currently working on these updates, with ongoing involvement from the Land Trust in the process.

## **COUNCIL PRIORITY PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS**

Outdoors and Recreation: "Expand opportunities for use of outdoor recreation and an active and healthy lifestyle."

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

Not Applicable

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

Not Applicable

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Formal Request from the City to the Land Trust
2. Formal Letter from the Land Trust



**DATE:** July 15, 2024  
**TO:** The Land Trust of Napa County  
**FROM:** The City of American Canyon  
**RE:** Formal Request for the Allowance of Class 1 E-Bikes in Newell Open Space Preserve

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## **BACKGROUND**

Newell Open Space Preserve is a 640-acre agricultural open space where open and active year-round cattle grazing occurs under a license shared with the adjacent Azevedo Livestock Company and Lynch Canyon properties and is open to the public for passive recreational use. Additionally, this property abuts Lynch Canyon, and no fence is used to separate the properties due to the open cattle grazing between the two properties with the Azevedo family.

The property was gifted to the City of American Canyon in 1999, the Newell Management Plan was created for the City and the Land Trust in 2001, and the City obtained public access in 2015.

The Deed of Conservation Easement holds seven conservation values for low-density, passive recreational use which include hiking, horseback riding, bicycling, overnight tent camping, casual picnicking, wildlife observation, nature study, environmental education, photography, kite flying, scenery painting, and meditating. Per Section 4.7 – *“The plan also will examine possible restrictions on the use of bicycles on the Property, which consideration being given to such factors as the potential threat of erosion and other harm to the terrain, the nature of the proposed uses, and the ability of Grantors to afford the cost of mitigating any damage to the Property or injury to other users of the Property that might be caused by such proposed bicycle use.”* Mountain biking is currently permitted within the property, and there is a growing interest from the American Canyon community to allow Class 1 e-bikes within Newell Open Space.

## **ANALYSIS**

The City of American Canyon is currently updating the Newell Management Plan to ensure it aligns with the Deed of Conservation Easement and is negotiating a contract with WRA Environmental Consultants to assist with this update; we anticipate starting this work in the fall of 2024. Additionally, the City has made significant efforts to manage and operate the property by implementing and executing the Standard Operating and Maintenance Procedure (Attachment 1). This procedure serves as a guiding document for City staff on how to manage, maintain, and operate Newell Open Space, ensuring alignment with the Conservation Easement and integrating into the updated Newell Management Plan.

Over the past year, the City has implemented the Standard Operating and Maintenance Procedure, which included adding gravel to the trail within the grazing pasture, repairing ruts and trail damage through grading, and implementing seasonality restrictions to prevent pedestrian use during inclement weather. Additionally, the City has hired a full-time Recreation Coordinator to assist in overseeing the City’s open space properties.

The Preserve’s trail system is a Class 2, Multi-Use for bicyclists, equestrians, and pedestrians. With its moderate terrain, the trail invites individuals of varying skill levels to explore and enjoy the natural

surroundings, fostering a shared space for outdoor enthusiasts. Thanks to Placer.Ai, a cloud-based participant tracking platform, the Preserve welcomed roughly 3200 visitors from June 2023 to June 2024, averaging around 9 people per day (Attachment 2). However, we are unsure how many of these visitors are biking versus engaging in other allowed passive recreational use.

It is important to note that Lynch Canyon, which shares a border with Newell Open Space, allows Class 1 e-bikes. There are currently no barriers preventing individuals from crossing from Lynch Canyon into Newell Open Space on an e-bike, and we are aware that this is happening.

Under the California Vehicle Code, e-bikes are to be operated like conventional bicycles and are exempt from various laws and requirements that apply to motorcycles and automobiles. The California Vehicle Code defines e-bikes as: “A bicycle equipped with fully operable pedals and an electric motor of less than 750 watts.” E-bikes are broken into three categories:

- CLASS 1: Bikes with a top assisted speed of 20 mph that must be pedaled to operate.
- CLASS 2: Bikes with a top assisted speed of 20 mph that can be operated without pedaling by using a handlebar-mounted throttle.
- CLASS 3: Bikes with a top speed of 28 mph that must be pedaled operated.

There are no age restrictions on Class 1 and 2 e-bikes. Riders must be at least 16 to operate a Class 3, and all Class 3 riders, regardless of age, must wear a helmet. All riders under the age of 18 must wear a helmet on any type of bike. CA State AB1096 authorizes a local jurisdiction (city, county, etc.) to prohibit the operation of any electric bicycle or any class of electric bicycle on an equestrian trail, hiking, or recreation trails. Additionally, manufacturers are required to label all e-bikes that specify the type and wattage that are distributed within the state of California. This indication helps identify the type of e-bike and if they are permitted within that particular bikeway. E-bikers are subjected to the same rules and legal requirements that apply to people riding a traditional bicycle when it comes to speed, proper passing, following all traffic safety laws, obeying speed limits, and other state and local ordinances.

## **REQUEST**

As the owner and operator of the property, we are requesting permission from the Land Trust of Napa County to allow the recreational use of Class 1 e-bikes in Newell Open Space Preserve per the Conservation Easement, Sections 4.5 and 4.7.

Upon approval, the City is committed to doing the following:

- Update the Standard Operating and Maintenance Procedure to allow Class 1 e-bikes only.
- The e-bike must be clearly labeled with the manufacturer’s label indicating the type of e-bike and wattage.
- Require E-bikers to follow the same rules and regulations as a bicyclists.
- Require E-bikers to follow the California Vehicle Code for bicyclists.
- Add to the Standard Operating and Maintenance Procedure that requires bicyclists, including Class 1 e-bikes to have a max speed of 15 mph, and reduce speed to 5 mph when passing or on blind turns, and when approaching and passing wildlife and cattle.
- Add to the Standard Operating and Maintenance Procedure that all riders and pedestrians are required to stay on designated trails. Closed areas or off-trail use, including straying off the trail for jumps, “wallrides” and “whoop-de-dos” is strictly prohibited.
- Update and post signage to reflect the new rules.
- Continue with our seasonal maintenance to meet the needs of our various approved recreational activities.



01 August 2024

City of American Canyon  
Attn: Alexandra Ikeda, Parks & Recreation Director  
4381 Broadway  
American Canyon, CA 94503

Dear Allie,

Thank you for formalizing the City of American Canyon's (the "City") request regarding the use of e-bikes on the Jack and Bernice Newell Open Space Preserve ("Newell Preserve" or "Property"), covered by the 1999 conservation easement held by the Land Trust of Napa County ("Land Trust"). I have reviewed the conservation easement, the baseline documentation report, and the 2001 management plan, read the City's Standard Operating and Maintenance Procedure, inspected the road network, and spoken with internal advisors. The Land Trust agrees that recreational biking on the Property is conditionally consistent with the intent and terms of the conservation easement. The Land Trust finds no distinction between traditional pedal mountain bike use and the proposed Class I e-bike use.

Under Paragraph 4.7 of the conservation easement, public recreational activities on the Property should be delineated through a management plan. The 2001 management plan anticipated public recreation, although more as speculation and not directly implemented either at the time of its creation or the subsequent opening of the Newell Preserve in 2015. The Standard Operating and Maintenance Procedure, drafted in 2023, codify conditions for use by the public on the Property and include detail about maintenance and monitoring of the Property's infrastructure from said uses.

To comply fully with Paragraph 4.7, the Land Trust requests an update to the 2001 management plan, particularly Part Two, Sections B and C, such that current and anticipated site use, management and improvement are accurately represented. This update should "examine possible restrictions on the use of bicycles on the Property, with consideration being given to such factors as the potential threat of erosion and other harm to terrain, the nature of the proposed uses, and the ability of the [Owner] to afford the cost of mitigating any damage to the Property or injury to other users of the Property that might be caused by such proposed bicycle uses." Again, the conservation easement does not distinguish between types of bicycles, only that such impact of their use is assessed and documented through the management plan.

Upon review of the updated management plan sections, the Land Trust will assess any remaining conditions as to consistency with the terms of the conservation easement. I hope this clarifies any outstanding questions. Please do not hesitate to contact us for additional details on assessment,

documentation, or planned activities for the Newell Preserve. We will be in contact with the City regarding the annual monitoring visit, tentatively scheduled for fall 2024.

Sincerely,

*Lena Pollastro*

Lena Pollastro  
Conservation Director

cc: Jason Holley, City Manager



## **TITLE**

Update Newell Management Plan

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Review and comment on the draft Newell Management Plan.

## **CONTACT**

Alexandra Ikeda, Parks and Recreation Director

## **BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS**

On June 18, 2024, the City Council approved the Open Space, Active Transportation, and Sustainability Commission's Work Plan for Fiscal Year 2024/25, which included updating the Management Plan for the Newell Open Space Preserve. The original Plan was adopted in November 2001 in partnership with the Land Trust of Napa County (Land Trust). Although the Plan was instrumental at the time, it was created when public access was not permitted. In 2015, the City secured public access to the Preserve, but never updated the Plan to reflect this.

The draft being reviewed is the original Chapter One from the 2001 Plan. The Land Trust has reviewed the document and recommends a new biological survey for mammals, birds, and amphibians due to the recent development adjacent to the property. City staff are currently looking into the cost of this survey. The Land Trust was neutral on the updates to the cultural resources, vegetation, geology, soils, or hydrology, as these aspects of the environment have not changed since 2001. Additionally, the update outlines the framework for how the rest of the Plan will be structured and written, including operations and maintenance of the property.

The goal of the Commission is to update the Plan that will outline the management and operation of 640 acres of agricultural open space, where active year-round cattle grazing occurs alongside public passive recreational use. The update will ensure alignment with the Conservation Easement, preserving the overall functions of the property while supporting public access and sustainable land use.

## **COUNCIL PRIORITY PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS**

Community and Sense of Place: "Build on the strength of our local community to develop a clear 'sense of place' and establish our unique identity."

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Not Applicable

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

Not Applicable

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. [Draft Newell Management Plan](#)



## NEWELL OPEN SPACE PRESERVE Management Plan



**July 2024**

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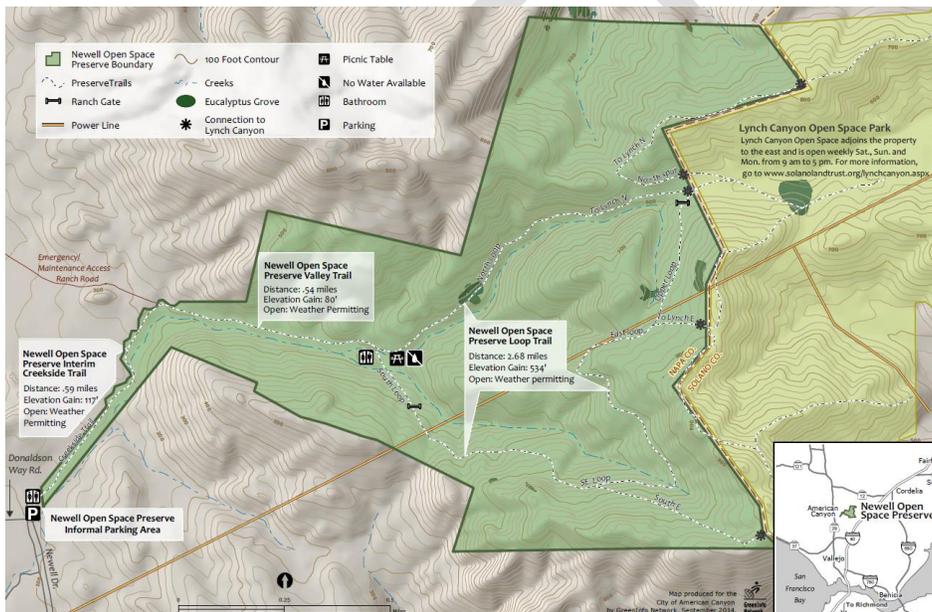
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DRAFT

## 1.0 History of Newell Open Space Preserve

In December 1999, Jack and Bernice Newell donated 640 acres to the City of American Canyon (the City), dedicated as public open space for the American Canyon community and region to enjoy forever, and to protect valuable agricultural and natural resources. Newell Open Space Preserve shares a border with Lynch Canyon Open Space, where the Azevedo Livestock Company and Ranch grazes both properties. The Land Trust of Napa County (Land Trust) holds a Conservation Easement, also donated in 1999 by the Newells to the Land Trust. In 2015, the American Canyon community obtained public access for passive recreational use under the Conservation Easement.

### 1.1 Property Map



## 2.0 Overarching Management Plan

In November 2001, the City, in partnership with the Land Trust, adopted the original Newell Open Space Management Plan. The 2001 Plan served as a valuable and instrumental tool at the time; however, it was created when public access was envisioned for the property, although then achieved until 2015. The 2024 Plan will guide the City to continue supporting the active and passive management of the property, ensuring it aligns with the Conservation Easement, both of which are designed to

preserve the overall functions and values of the property. The 2024 Plan supersedes the 2001 Plan.

## **2.1 Purpose of the Plan**

The purpose of this long-term management plan is to ensure the City of American Canyon manages, monitors, and maintains the property in perpetuity in a manner consistent with the terms and conditions of the Conservation Easement. The Plan serves to conserve natural resources, balance land use between recreational opportunities and conservation goals, and ensure sustainable public access that does not negatively impact the environment. It includes maintenance and management practices, protects cultural and historical resources, and guides the long-term stewardship of the property to maintain its value and accessibility for future generations.

## **2.2 Land Ownership and Use**

### *2.2.1 The City of American Canyon*

The City of American Canyon owns, operates, and manages the Property for agricultural and public recreation use, adhering to the guidelines and conservation values of the Deed of Conservation Easement held by the Land Trust of Napa County.

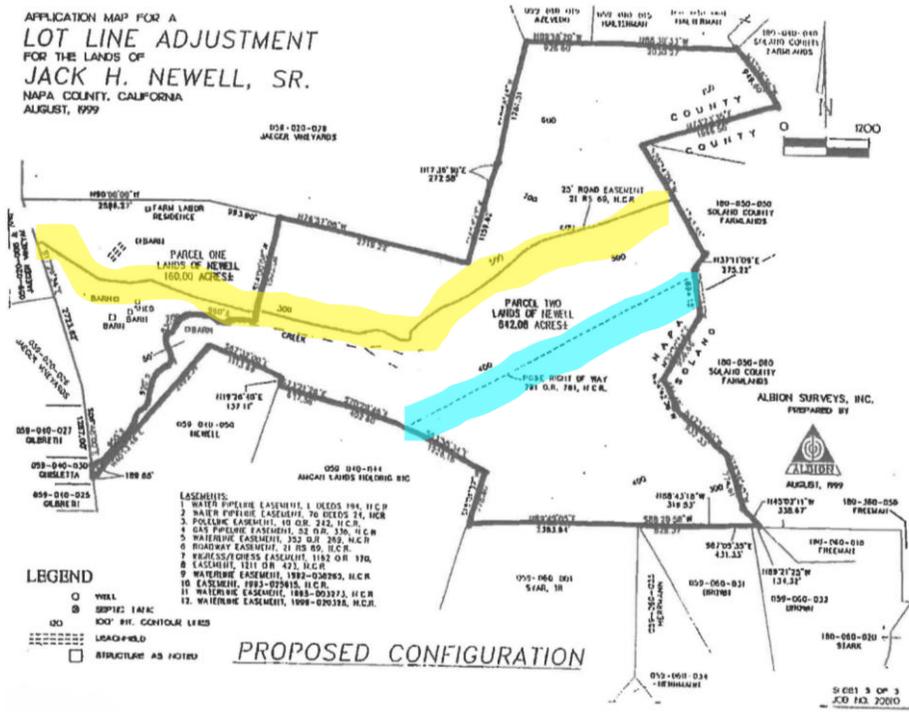
### *2.2.2 Land Trust of Napa County Deed of Conservation Easement*

The City of American Canyon holds the Fee Title to the property, while the Conservation Easement is held by the Land Trust of Napa County (Appendix A) over the entire property. The Easement grants the Land Trust the right to enter and monitor the property to ensure compliance with the protection of the conservation values. The values include natural, scenic, open space, historical, agricultural, educational, and recreational aspects that are of great importance to the City, the people of Napa County, and the people of the State of California. The Land Trust may restrict and prohibit the use of the property at any time if such use conflicts with the Conservation Easement.

### *2.2.3 PG&E Electrical Easement*

PGE has a major electrical transmission line and easement that bisects the site, highlighted in blue, as well as a 25-foot wide road easement on the property, highlighted in yellow. A portion of the road easements serves as the main trail of the property. See the below figure for PG&E Electrical Easement details.

APPLICATION MAP FOR A  
**LOT LINE ADJUSTMENT**  
 FOR THE LANDS OF  
**JACK H. NEWELL, SR.**  
 NAPA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA  
 AUGUST, 1999



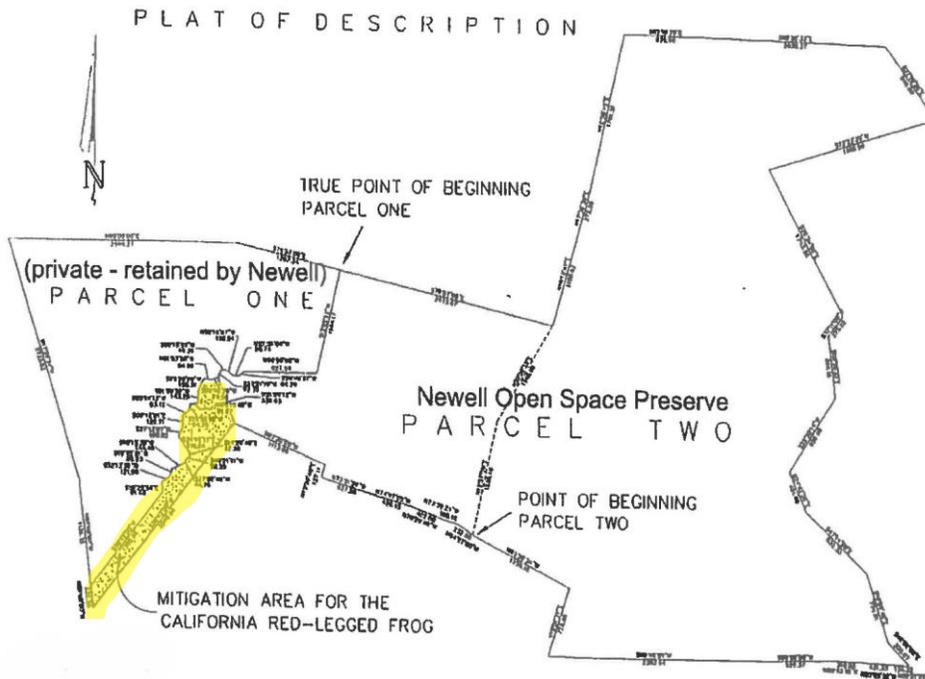
**2.2.4 Red-Legged Frog Mitigation Area**

When the property was deeded to the City, Jack and Bernice Newell retained the right to designate a portion of the land as habitat mitigation area for the federally listed endangered California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*). This area, although related to wildlife habitat, is discussed here because it represents a private property right and its use addresses off-site habitat issues. Two nearby proposed residential development projects, Creekside Homes by Young California Homes L.P. and Village Green Homes by Hoffman Land Development Company, were set to impact the existing red-legged frog habitat. The developers proposed constructing habitat mitigation on the Newell property through an arrangement with Jack and Bernice Newell.

The mitigation area is outlined in the below figure.

**Commented [LP1]:** Is this still retained, though? Unless it was held out of the title (like a deed restriction with the Newell family – or as part of the CE), a 3<sup>rd</sup> party usually cannot retain this. If it's part of the CE, the retained right actually stays with the property owner, so once the Newell family gave the property to the City, then it would be the City who has the right to undertake the mitigation. Not sure how it actually happened in 2001, and having the background IS very useful. But I kinda think the Newell family does not have this right anymore. Call to discuss, if you'd like. I have ideas on other wording to start the paragraph in this case.

**Commented [AI2R1]:** This is more history. The right is no longer retained by the newell. This is done won't be happening on the newell property. Don't want to add anything to the property.



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), responsible for protecting the frog, determined the extent of the potential impact and necessary mitigation area and conditions, as part of the overall permit for work in federal wetland areas issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE). On September 15, 2000, USFWS informed the development companies that 1.96 and 2.22 acres of respective habitat mitigation area, or 4.14 acres total, would be required on the Newell property to mitigate the impact on frog habitat on the development sites.

At a meeting on November 16, 2000, with representatives from the City, the Land Trust, and USFWS, the developers presented preliminary plans for creating shallow seasonal wetland ponds in the frog mitigation area along the existing creek. While the initial plan did not fully meet the direct habitat area requirements set by USFWS, it appeared feasible. A more significant issue was the USFWS requirements for a buffer zone – a 600-foot-wide by 3,000-foot-long area centered on the mitigation site. This buffer zone must be fenced within which no land use or disturbance allowed.

The proposed buffer zone is incompatible with the potential use and improvement of the property, as it would extend the mitigation area well beyond the barn and entry

area, already anticipated to be the most intensely used and improved portion of the entire property. This condition is not part of the mitigation rights retained on the property. Instead, the developers were required to provide the buffer zone on large strips of private land on either side of the mitigation area. Unfortunately, in the early 2000's, the created ponds were unsuccessful in achieving the intended habitat mitigation for the California red-legged frog.

#### 2.2.6 Land Use Designations and Jurisdictions

The property is designated as "Agricultural, Watershed and Open Space" in the Land Use Element of the Napa County General Plan and falls within the City of American Canyon's Sphere of Influence, as indicated in the City's General Plan Land Use Map. It is also within the urban limit line and designated as Agriculture. Although the property is outside the city limits, the City owns it and may use and improve the property, subject to the conditions of the Conservation Easement, without having to obtain permits or approval from Napa County.

The Azevedo family, early settlers to the region, have been cattle grazing on the property and the adjacent Lynch Canyon Open Space in Solano County for the last 50 years. They currently hold a Grazing License with the City and pay an annual grazing fee to graze the upper portion of the property. The terms and conditions of the Azevedo's Grazing License are not part of this document.

### 3.0 Vegetation and Wildlife

Newell Open Space Preserve is a haven for a diverse range of flora and fauna, thanks to its unique geographical location between the Coast Range and Central Valley. This positioning creates a blended mosaic of interior and coastal vegetation, enhancing the Preserve's ecological richness. The landscape is primarily non-native annual grasslands, a result of historical wheat farming and long-term cattle grazing, interspersed with pockets of mixed hardwood forests (comprised mainly of Coast live oak, California bay laurel, and madrone trees) and a single eucalyptus grove.

Water, a crucial element for wildlife, is abundant in the Preserve. Creeks, springs, and seeps provide vital hydration, breeding grounds, and habitat for various species. Water flows through the creeks for much of the year, while hillside springs and seeps often feature saturated soils and standing water, further supporting the Preserve's diverse ecosystem.

Botanical surveys conducted in 1988 for the proposed American Canyon Landfill Replacement Plan identified six distinct plant communities on the property. Further surveys in the spring 2001 reiterated these community descriptions and updated the inventory of plant species across the entire area. The general plant communities are illustrated in the figure below. A comprehensive list of vascular plant species observed during the 1988 and 2001 surveys is available in Appendix B. A description of wildlife species and habitat is integrated into the plant communities to provide greater clarity in

**Commented [LP3]:** Is it worth adding a line as to whether this mitigation right of the Newells continues to exist any longer? I suspect not, and the question that comes up is whether the City would allow future mitigation for CRLF.

See above comment.

habitat management. The site was assessed by a wildlife biologist in 1988 for the American Canyon Landfill Replacement EIR document. A list of common, potential and observed wildlife species can be found in Appendix C. A detailed description of observed bird nesting sites, along with an updated list of bird species, is available through the Audubon Society.

**Commented [A14]:** Need to locate this. The City does not have a record and it was not included in the original Management Plan as an attachment.

### 3.1 Non-Native Grassland

The physical characteristics of the site's soil, combined with local weather patterns, have created a landscape predominantly covered by grassland, which accounts for over 80% of the Preserve. Historically, this area was likely a native grassland community dominated by species such as purple needlegrass, California oat grass, creeping rye, and blue-eyed grass. The clay soil (Fagan Clay Loam), known for its slow permeability and high plasticity, hinders the growth of trees and shrubs. This soil type remains saturated from fall through mid-spring, only to crack during the summer drought, making it difficult for most woody species to establish roots

Before Spanish colonization in the 1830's, the area may have supported scattered trees and small groves along seasonal drainages. The presence of Native American grinding stones on the adjoining Lynch Canyon property, located far from any oak trees, hints at more extensive woodlands in the past. Regular burning by Native Americans could have suppressed the recruitment of young trees and shrubs, and the introduction of perennial cattle grazing, which continues today, may have exacerbated this effect. As aging trees died without being replaced by younger ones, grazing gave a competitive advantage to non-native grasses and forbs, which now dominate the site.

Early in the season, the grassland is dominated by species such as wild oats, ripgut brome, winter vetch, and redstem filaree. As spring progresses, yellow and purple thistle – aggressive invasive species from the Mediterranean region - take over. These invasive thistles are particularly problematic, with star thistle becoming unpalatable to cattle once its spiny flower-heads form in mid-May. Another Cal EPA listed noxious weed, cardoon, poses a significant threat to native vegetation if left uncontrolled. Other invasive exotics, including wild anise, teasel, and horehound, are also present in localized populations.

Common species in this community include Italian thistle, milk thistle, cut leaf geranium, wild barley, and soft brome. Native forb species have been largely displaced, with only a few, such as erect eve's, succulent lupine, and common fiddle, maintaining a strong foothold. Historically, this community may have supported the rare and endangered Indian clover (*Trifolium ammonium*), which was collected near Napa Junction (American Canyon) in 1891. This species preferred the rich grassy swales that exists in the lower, flat areas near the mouth of the canyon.

**Commented [LP5]:** Native? Non-native? Invasives? Also, should this be "forb species"?

These grasslands support a diverse array of avian species, including meadowlark, say's phoebe, northern shrike, horned lark, Savannah sparrow, and killdeer. The horned lark is listed as a species of special concern by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Additionally, special status species such as white-tailed kites, northern harrier and golden eagles may utilize this habitat to hunt small mammals. Golden eagles are regularly seen in the area and nest within the region. Several mammal species also inhabit these grasslands, including pocket gophers, ground squirrels, field mice, blacktail jackrabbit, coyote and mule deer. The open grassland provides excellent habitat for reptiles like the western rattlesnake, gopher snake, and western terrestrial garter snake. However, the presence of non-native red foxes, which have been observed onsite, may pose a threat to native wildlife, particularly ground nesting birds.

### 3.2 Central Coast Riparian Forest (Coast Live Oak Series)

This linear plant community thrives along the stream bank, supported by perennial water availability. It is nearly continuous along the southern branch of Newell Creek but becomes fragmented along the norther branch and in the southwest part of the park. Spanning approximately 14.5 acres, the community is dominated by Arroyo willow and shining willow along the south branch, with California bay and coast live oak being common, particularly in the upper reach. Here, the canopy reaches 100%, with trees spanning between 50 to 75 feet tall. The understory is sparse or absent due to the inhibitory properties of bay tree litter, a condition worsened by cattle grazing and trampling.

Where the riparian community meets the Coast Live Oak Forest (middle reach), willows form an outer band, blending the live oak and bay elements into the adjacent forest canopy. In the lower reach, the distinction becomes clearer, with shining and Arroyo willow dominating. The understory, along with gaps in the canopy, hosts thickets of California blackberry, poison oak, Santa Barbara sedge, and alkali rye. Other common species include common snowberry, California rose, Douglas's mugwort, California figwort, and hoary nettle. The adjacent grassland along the lower reach remains saturated under normal winter conditions and has been heavily invaded by Fuller's teasel. Notable, Victor's gooseberry (*Ribes victoris*), a special status species on the California Native Plant Society's watch list ([List No.](#)) and afforded some protection under CEQA, is found in the upper reach of this community, represented by eight individuals in three location.

Many bird species, including Nuttall's woodpecker, northern flicker, black phoebe, spotted towhee, scrub jay, golden-crowned sparrow, song sparrows, and yellow-rumped warbler, frequently inhabit the riparian community. These isolated strands of woodland vegetation are crucial for many species during spring and fall migrations, including the special status yellow warbler. The areas also provides habitat for raccoons, skunks, coyotes, weasels, and ornate shrews. Resident amphibians and reptiles may include the pacific tree frog, garter snake, ring-neck snake, slender salamander, and alligator lizard. The western pond turtle, another special status species by the California Department of Fish & Wildlife, is likely to be found along the lower reaches of the streams. Additional, this stretch of Newell Creek is designated as habitat mitigation for the federally protected California red-legged frog.

**Commented [LP6]:** By stating this, it would be good to have a map showing the approximate area (if contained) or locations (if disparate). Otherwise, I would add language like "...is found in the upper reach of this community, IN THE XX PORTION OF THE PRESERVE, represented...".

**Commented [LP7]:** State Endangered? State Species of Special Concern?  
It's good to note the level and which entity whenever these are found throughout the document. Mostly because it's the first question I think when I read it. But if Joe Q. Public is reading it, it also provides an additional layer of authority and/or consideration for any type of management decisions or work.

### 3.3 Coast Live Oak Forest (Coast Live Oak Series)

On one north-facing slope, conditions favor a forest dominated by coast live oak. The soil here, coarser than that in the surrounding grassland (Millsholm loam, moderate permeability), and reduced sun exposure help retain moisture longer, extending the growing season. This community spans approximately 40-45 acres on steep to moderate slopes. Tree cover exceeds 75, with several openings, particularly near the edges. Common associated trees include California bay (35%), madrone (5-10%), and black oak (1%). The brushy understory is rich with species such as poison oak, hazelnut, common snowberry, Torrey's melica, and California wood fern. This is one of the most diverse communities in the Preserve, hosting 78 of the 225 plant species identified on site. While no special status plant species were found in this plant community, the striped coral root (*Corallorhiza striata*), which is rare in Napa County, occurs in small numbers.

The dense cover provided by trees and brush offers vital habitat for bird species such as the great horned owl, Pacific-slope flycatcher, Northern flicker, chestnut-backed chickadee, Steller's jay, and California towhee. Various mammals, including the big brown bat, hoary bat, pallid bat, dusky-footed wood rat, Audubon's cottontail, and gray fox, may also inhabit this area. The bat species, which are special concern, use tunnels and tree hollows for roosting. Resident reptiles and amphibians in the area may include the tiger salamander, rough-skinned newt, ensatina, Pacific treefrog, southern alligator lizard, and common kingsnake. Additionally, several special status bird species, such as Cooper's hawk, golden eagle, sharp-shinned hawk, and prairie falcon, may utilize this habitat.

Commented [LP8]: Like here, too.

### 3.4 Bald Hills Prairie (Purple Needlegrass Series)

This community exhibits characteristics of both interior and coastal grassland ecosystems. The regular influence of coastal fog during the summer months and the presence of blue flag (*Festuca idahoensis*) and California oat grass (*Danthonia californica* ssp. *californica*) suggest it is a variant of the Bald Hill Prairie community. This area is a remnant of the vegetation community that likely once dominated the property but is now limited to the steeper slopes near the eastern and southern boundaries, roughly aligning with the Kreyenhagen Formation footprint described in the 1988 Landfill report.

Common species here include purple needlegrass, blue eye grass, California buttercup, Indian soap plant, and wild oats. The ridge line features a discontinuous strand of sandstone outcrops that supports coastal scrub elements. Picturesque, wind-sculpted coast live oak and California bay trees crown the ridge top. The Domengine Sandstone rocks support a unique assemblage of shrubs and perennials, including hairy golden aster, California mahonia, rock-loving daisy, California Indian pink, and California Achaean. The Preserve may contain as much as 90% of this plant association type in Napa County. Additionally, this community includes nine patches of California balsamroot (*Balsamorhiza macrolepis* ssp. *macrolepis*), a rare and endangered plant listed by the California Native Plant Society as List #A. This member of the sunflower

Commented [LP9]: What listing by CNPS? This can be found using CalFlora website.

family is confined to the Bay Area region and is protected under CEQA.

This community offers a habitat for bird and wildlife species similar to those found in the non-native grassland community, with the added benefit of brushy areas and rock outcrops that may support additional species. It may also serve as a habitat for several special status avian species, including the northern harrier, rough-legged hawk, golden eagle, and ferruginous hawk. Bald eagles and peregrine falcons are rare visitors to this area.

### 3.5 Serpentine Bunchgrass (Foothill Needlegrass Series)

A small portion of the property along the southern boundary features a unique grassland community shaped by the challenging conditions of serpentine soil. This area, approximately 12 acres in size, is part of a larger serpentine grassland extending southward into American Canyon. Due to the specific Calcium/Magnesium ratio (0.40 measured in American Canyon, K. Martin, 1987) in serpentine soils, many non-native species are excluded, allowing native annual and perennial species to thrive. Dominant species in this area include the California Poppy, hayfield tarweed, and purple needlegrass. Other common native species in the area include naked-stem buckwheat, small-flowered needlegrass, soft cheat, and erect evax. Notably, this community is home to the Tiburon paintbrush (*Castilleja affinis* ssp. *neglecta*), a federally listed endangered species. The property supports approximately 5-10% of the Napa County population of this species, with an estimated 35 plants recorded in March 2001.

Additionally, this community offers a similar wildlife habitat to that described for Bald Hill Prairie and Non-Native Grassland. The area may serve as a habitat for burrowing owls and supports a higher density of reptiles, particularly among the rock slopes. The unique conditions of the serpentine substrate (ultramafic rock – high levels of magnesium and iron) and the presence of diverse native plant species further enhance the ecological value of this habitat, making it an important refuge for various species adapted to these specific conditions.

### 3.6 Wetlands (Spikerush Series)

The dense clay-loam soils and rocky substrate of the Preserve give rise to several seasonal and perennial seeps and springs, where groundwater meets the soil surface. In addition to six seep areas and two springs onsite, the exposed bottoms of several stream channels, where they receive full sunlight, support a similar array of wetland species. A few seasonal ponds are also present within the Preserve. Dominant species in these wetland areas include brown-headed rush, Pacific bog rush, bristly ox-tongue, winter cress, clover, and curly dock. Other commonly associated species include Baltic rush and Mexican plantain – which is uncommon in Napa County.

This habitat provides essential water and forage for wildlife and may serve as a crucial habitat for the red-legged frog, a species of concern. The wetlands feed into the creek system, which exits the preserve through the California red-legged frog habitat, further

**Commented [LP10]:** I also saw these plants in 2009 and probably again in 2010 or 2011, although I didn't count them. Just noted where they were, took some pictures, etc.  
I can check our monitoring reports and see if I noted it there. But I can probably get myself there again on a hike.

enhancing the ecological importance of these areas. However, cattle grazing has significantly influenced the biomass of wetland plants and altered the composition of these habitats by facilitating the invasion of non-native species.

### 3.7 Species Observations

The Preserve serves as an important resting location for migratory birds during the spring, fall, and sometimes winter. While many bird species observed onsite are not rare, some are unusual for this location, including the varied thrush, Steller's jay, and merlin – a relatively rare falcon. During winter, long-eared owls seek refuge in the Preserve's dense groves.

The Preserve is particularly attractive to raptors due to its elevated hills, strategic location between the coast and Central Valley, distance from human disturbance, and the persistent, strong offshore westerly winds from spring to fall. These winds, when they meet the hills, create wind inversion, offering favorable soaring conditions.

The existing habitats likely support occasional visits from protected bird species such as the bald eagle, peregrine falcon, and possibly other raptors. Several bird species of concern to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife could be expected to occur on or near the property. Bird counts conducted by the Solano and Napa County Audubon Society Chapters have documented the presence of prairie falcons, white-tailed kites, and sharp-shinned hawks – all species of special concern in California. Additionally, a northern harrier, a species of special concern with priority status #2, was observed during the wildlife survey. The 1989 Environmental Impact Report (EIR) indicates that the Preserve offers suitable nesting habitat for several of these species.

Golden eagles are relatively abundant in this area, with the first recorded sightings dating back to 1966. These majestic birds are regularly observed foraging at nearby Lynch Canyon. Golden eagles typically choose nesting sites on cliffs or in large trees near ridge tops, often alternating between two or three nesting sites in different years. In the vicinity of the Preserve, there has historically been a triangle of three golden eagle nesting sites. While one of these sites is located within the Preserve, the others are part of the border habitat complex. The characteristics that make these sites desirable for nesting include clusters of trees on steep hillsides surrounded by open land, distance from human activity, and the availability of water.

Protecting these nesting sites when they are in use by eagles is an important aspect of managing and operating the Preserve. Golden eagle court between November and December, and raise their young over approximately nine months, from December through August. To ensure their safety, we adhere to protections under the Endangered Species Act and California's rare, threatened, and endangered species lists. Additionally, the City must comply with federal regulations, including the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, which prohibits the taking, possession, sale, purchase, barter, or transport of any bald or golden eagle, whether alive or dead, including any part, nest, or egg, without a permit. The City also follows regulations set out within the

**Commented [LP11]:** Is American Canyon considered to be part of the Pacific Flyway? This is a major migratory route along the Pacific Coast, and if part of that, could be important to note its value as open space for aviary species.

**Commented [LP12]:** Again, I think it would be worthwhile to probably get the bird species updated for the Preserve, namely because it serves a significant resource for rare bird species within Napa County, and the surrounding area. This could be a to-do item, but I think it's a reasonable assumption to update a lot of the bird information in this report with more current surveys. Rationale: there are references to being far from human activity, and in 2001, this was the case. Not so much in 2024 with the residential developments around. AND higher level of proposed recreational activity brings more humans – not a bad thing, just making sure that information is current.

**Commented [LP13]:** Particularly because of this – the bird species HAVE likely changed with the extension of Newell Drive and the incoming residential construction between the Preserve and the high school.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which forbids the taking, killing, possession, transportation, or importation of all migratory birds, their eggs, parts, and nests unless authorized by a valid permit.

#### **4.0 Cultural Resources**

The natural beauty of Newell Open Space is immediately striking, with its majestic vistas of rolling hills, clusters of trees, and creek side vegetation. This landscape also holds a rich history of the people who have lived, worked, and raised families here.

In August 1988, the Cultural Resource Facility at Sonoma State University conducted a cultural resource field survey for the American Canyon Replacement Landfill Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The study revealed that the Preserve is located within the traditional territory of the Patwin, a Native American group whose language and culture once extended approximately 90 miles from Suisun Bay north to Princeton, and about 40 miles west from the Sacramento River. Within ten miles of the Preserve, five Patwin village sites have been recorded.

The Patwin people sustained a diversified economy based on fishing, hunting, and gathering, adapting their settlement and subsistence patterns to seasonal food availability. During the winter, the valley-dwelling Patwin inhabited permanent villages within the marshlands. In summer, they relocated to smaller tributaries on surrounding plains. The upland groups, in contrast, wintered near streams exiting into the valley or at other favorable streamside locations, moving to the surrounding hills in the summer.

The Preserve area would have been inhabited by the upland Patwin. Prehistoric sites in the Preserve are likely to have been winter village sites, characterized by middens with large quantities of shell and bone, specialized areas such as butchering stations, and seed and acorn grinding areas. The archaeological survey conducted on June 28, 1988, identified two prehistoric sites in the Preserve, designated as CA-NAP-751 and CA-NAP-752 in the EIR. These sites, considered together, represent potentially unique archaeological resources.

The Patwin way of life was rapidly disrupted following colonization by Euro-Americans. Some Patwin were removed from their villages by the Spanish missions, while others succumbed to malaria and smallpox epidemics in the 1830s. The few remaining Patwin were displaced with American settlement of the area in the 1850s and 1860s.

Early explorers, missionaries, and trappers reported the presence of pronghorn antelope, mule deer, elk, bear, mountain lions, and coyotes in the region. Herds as large as 1,000 to 2,000 elk and 3,000 antelope were recorded. However, elk, antelope, bears, and mountain lions were soon eliminated following Spanish and American settlement, while deer were heavily hunted but not entirely eradicated.

The demand for firewood led to the harvesting of native cottonwood and oaks. To address the diminishing wood supplies, landowners planted eucalyptus, an Australian import, as an alternative. Several eucalyptus still stand today visible in the Preserve.

In 1864, Mary and Richard James Falls settled in the Preserve area, which they named Fall Ranch. Richard James had acquired a bounty land certificate in New Orleans for a 40-acre parcel. The family cultivated wheat on the ranch and eventually expanded their holdings to approximately 170 acres. Their home was located in the clearing at the southwest entrance to the Preserve, where the old barn still stands. The Falls family continued to run the ranch until it was sold in 1900 to Charles Cantoni.

The Cantoni family once operated a dairy farm on the ranch, and many longtime residents fondly remember their charming, white, old-fashioned two-story home in the same location as the Fall's family home. Local lore includes childhood visits to the Cantoni ranch to buy butter, eggs, and pick flowers for the grade school May Day celebration. Over the years, the Cantoni family leased various portions of the ranch.

From 1913 to 1964, part of the Preserve was owned by the Scally family, followed by Ted and Ruth Brown. In 1980, Jack and Bernice Newell purchased the ranch from the Cantoni and Brown families. They leased portions of the land to neighbors Ralph and Ron Azevedo for cattle grazing. The ranch was sold to the Tricounties Development Company in 1985, with plans for a replacement landfill. When these plans fell through, the Newell's purchased the ranch in 1992. In 1999, the Newell family generously gifted the land to the City of American Canyon, creating what is now a cherished open space preserve.

## 5.0 Geology, Soils, and Hydrology

The Preserve is nestled within the Coast Range, a mountain system that stretches from the Oregon border to Southern California. The site is located east of the Napa River floodplain and features two main canyons along with two tributary canyons. For clarity, specific names have been assigned to these canyons and their associated drainages.

The lower main canyon drainage and creek refer to the westward-draining canyon, which splits eastward into two tributary canyons. The south tributary creek flows from the southeastern part of the site to its junction with the lower and upper main canyon creeks. The upper main canyon tributary drainage and creek lie above this junction. On the northeastern portion of the property, another drainage basin flows northward, referred to as the north canyon drainage and creek. Elevation on the site ranges from approximately 125 feet above mean sea level (msl) at the western edge of the property to over 950 feet above msl at the southeastern corner.

### 5.1 Petrology

In 1988, EMCON Associate conducted a geologic and hydrogeologic analysis of the site. Their findings documented Quarternary alluvium and landslide deposits (dating

**Commented [LP14]:** I'm not clear what the names are. If anything, a map would help to delineate these canyon & drainages.

back as much as two million years), Eocene Markley Sandstone and Nortonville Shale members of the Kreyenhagen Formation, Eocene Domengine Sandstone, and Cretaceous to Jurassic-age bedrock units of the Great Valley Sequence and Franciscan Assemblage.

Alluvium, composed predominantly of clay with minor layers of silty sand, sand silt, and gravelly clay, occupies the drainage valleys of the main and tributary canyons. These alluvial deposits are eroded soils and bedrock debris laid down by the action of running water, rivers, and streams, forming the rich and varied geological features of the site.

Markley Sandstone underlies most of the site. This formation consists of medium to thick-bedded sandstone with interbeds of claystone, mudstone, and siltstone. The Markley Sandstone is moderately well-cemented and slightly fractured, with interbeds of crushed to intensely fractured claystone and mudstone.

The eastern and southern margins of the property are underlain by Nortonville Shale and Domengine Sandstone. Nortonville Shale is primarily composed of thinly bedded, intensely fractured claystone and mudstone, with some sandstone and siltstone interbeds. Domengine Sandstone consists of hard, slightly to intensely fractured sandstone with numerous pebbly layers, along with cobble and boulder conglomerate beds. Bedrock of the Franciscan Assemblage is exposed along the southern margin of the project site, consisting mostly of highly altered basalt known as greenstone. This rock is slightly to moderately fractured and has been altered locally into extremely hard silica carbonate rock.

#### *5.2 Site Geological Structure*

The site's geologic structure is primarily characterized by broad, northwest-to-west-trending folds. Faulting is relatively minor, with a few short faults likely caused by deformation associated with local folding. A 400-foot-wide, west-to-northwest-trending shear zone has been mapped along the southern margin of the site. This shear zone separates the Cretaceous Franciscan rocks to the south from the Eocene rocks to the north. It consists of a zone of mixed lithologies derived from adjacent in-place formations that have been sheared and faulted into contact with each other. EMCON Associates concluded that this fault zone has not been active for several years, and there are no known active faults passing through the Preserve. The closest active fault is the West Napa Fault. Other major San Francisco Bay Area faults that could generate ground shaking at the Preserve include the Green Valley Fault, located about four miles northeast, the Rodgers Creek-Healdsburg Fault, about 11 miles southwest, and the San Andreas Fault, approximately 31 miles southwest.

Notable geological features on the site include exposed Markley Sandstone rock faces above the eastern ridge at around 900 feet of elevation. Additionally, an exploratory mining tunnel, dug during World War II in a reported search for mineral magnetite, extends approximately 150 feet horizontally into a hillside near the southern boundary of

the property. While the mine is an intriguing part of the natural history of the property, it is not open to the public for exploration.

### 5.3 Soils

The Soil Conservation Service (SCS, 1978) identified the majority of the proposed landfill area as consisting of Fagan series clay loam soils. These soils (designated as Fa, Fb, Fc) are characterized by slow permeability, rapid runoff, and moderate to high erosion hazard. In the southwestern portion of the area, Millsholm loam was mapped on a steep north-facing hillside. Millsholm loam is a moderately permeable soil with very rapid runoff and a high erosion hazard. Additionally, a small area of Hambright-Rock outcrop complex (HR) is located along the southern boundary of the Preserve. This soil type is also moderately permeable, with rapid to very rapid runoff and a high erosion hazard.

In several tributary drainages on the site, problems such as "head cuts" or rotational slumps have been observed at the upper ends of draws, often leading to slope failures and gulying along the length of the draw. While these conditions are not directly caused by cattle activity, cattle may indirectly contribute by preventing the growth of woody vegetation that would otherwise stabilize these drainages.

The limited use of this site as an open space preserve is not expected to conflict with the soil characteristics of rapid runoff and moderate to high erosion hazards. This Management Plan ensures careful planning and execution of trail profiles, limits off-trail access, and actively monitors slope runoff conditions to effectively mitigate erosion and preserve the integrity of the landscape.

### 5.4 Hydrology

The site is situated in a hilly region that separates the alluvial basin of the Napa Valley to the west, drained by the Napa River, from the smaller Green Valley to the east, drained by Cordelia Slough. The hills are composed of sedimentary and metamorphic rocks, which have low permeability. Due to this low permeability and the likelihood of trapped marine water, these hills are not considered significant as a groundwater reservoir resource.

The ridge line along the sites eastern boundary serves as the drainage divided between the Napa Valley and Green Valley basins. Two stream drainages, or basin subareas, have developed on the site, both draining into the Napa Valley basin. The larger subarea, covering 85% of the site, includes the main canyon and the north and south canyons further east. The smaller subarea drains northward, originating north of the north canyon. The site is located above the 100-year floodplain of the Napa River and is not subject to inundation (FEMA, 1980).

Due to direct cattle activity and the associated reduction of protective woody vegetation and tree roots, many of the stream banks on the site are experiencing significant erosion and failure caused by the impact of stream flow. The stream

channels have become deeply undercut, with entrenched cascades that are gradually eroding upstream, contributing to stream siltation. The presence of vegetation growing within the channels indicates that these conditions have persisted for many years.

Intensive groundwater testing was conducted as part of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the landfill. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in collaboration with the Napa Flood Control and Water Conservation District, produced an isohyetal map for the Napa River basin. This map, derived from precipitation records collected between 1906 and 1956, predicts that the site receives an average annual precipitation of between 16 to 20 inches.

Groundwater levels at the site fluctuate throughout the year, primarily influenced by the amount of precipitation during the winter rainy season. Levels are highest during the winter and spring months when rainfall infiltrates and recharges the groundwater table in the bedrock. Conversely, groundwater levels are lowest in the autumn, just before the onset of the rainy season. During this period, spring discharge increases, and ephemeral springs and seeps develop at the bases of the landslide deposits.

The site features two perennial springs, likely resulting from the intersection of the groundwater table with the ground surface. These springs remain saturated throughout summer, continuing into October. As spring transitions into late spring, groundwater levels and perennial spring discharge begin to decrease. Additionally, short-lived ephemeral springs appear at the base of the landslide during the winter and spring, but these discharges cease in the summer as groundwater levels drop.