

Objective 5.2 Riparian Corridors and Wetlands

(LCP) To preserve, protect and restore all riparian corridors and wetlands for the protection of wildlife and aquatic habitat, water quality, erosion control, open space, aesthetic and recreational values and the conveyance and storage of flood waters.

Policies

52.1 Designation of Riparian Corridors and Wetlands

(LCP) Designate and define the following **areas** as Riparian Corridors:

- (a) 50' from the top of a distinct channel or physical evidence of high water mark of a **perennial** stream;
- (b) 30' **from** the top of a distinct channel or physical evidence of high water mark of an intermittent stream as designated on the General **Plan** maps and through field inspection of undesignated intermittent and ephemeral streams;
- (c) 100' of the high water mark of a lake, wetland, estuary, lagoon, or natural body of standing water,
- (d) The **landward** limit of a riparian woodland plant community;
- (e) **Wooded arroyos within urban areas.**

Designate and define the following areas as Wetlands:

Transitional areas between terrestrial and aquatic systems **where** the water table is usually at or near the surface, or the land is covered by shallow water periodically or permanently. Examples of wetlands are saltwater marshes, freshwater marshes, open or closed brackish water marshes, swamps, mudflats, and fens.

The US Army Corps of Engineers, and other federal agencies utilize a "unified methodology" which defines wetlands as "those areas meeting certain criteria for hydrology, vegetation, and soils."

533 Riparian Corridor and Wetland Protection Ordinance

(LCP) Implement the protection of Riparian Corridors and Wetlands through the Riparian Corridor and Wetland **Protection** ordinance to ensure no net loss of riparian corridors and riparian wetlands. The ordinance identifies and defines riparian corridors and wetlands, determines the uses which are allowed in and adjacent to these habitats, and specifies required buffers setbacks **and performance standards for land in and adjacent to these areas.** Any amendments to this ordinance shall require a finding that riparian corridors and wetlands shall be afforded equal or greater protection by the amended language.

533 Activities Within Riparian Corridors and Wetlands

(LCP) Development activities, land alteration and vegetation disturbance within riparian corridors and wetlands and required buffers shall be prohibited unless an exception is granted per the Riparian Corridor and Wetlands Protection ordinance. As a condition of riparian exception, require evidence of approval for development from the US Army Corps of Engineers, California Department of **Fish** and Game, and other federal or state agencies that may have regulatory authority over activities within riparian **corridors** and wetlands.

52.4 Riparian Corridor Buffer Setback

(LCP) Require a buffer setback **from** riparian corridors in addition to the specified distances found in the definition of riparian corridor. This setback shall be identified in the Riparian Corridor and Wetland Protection ordinance and established based on stream characteristics, vegetation and slope. Allow reductions to the buffer setback only upon approval of a riparian exception. Require a 10 foot separation from the edge of the riparian corridor buffer to any **structure.**

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52.5 Setbacks From Wetlands

(LCP) Prohibit development within the 100 foot riparian corridor of all wetlands. Allow exceptions to this setback only where consistent with the Riparian Corridor and Wetlands Protection ordinance, and in all cases, maximize distance between proposed structures and wetlands. Require measures to prevent water quality degradation from adjacent land uses, as outlined in the Water Resources section.

53.6 Riparian Corridors and Development Density

(LCP) Exclude land within riparian corridors in the calculation of development density or net parcel size. Grant full density credit for the portion of the property outside the riparian corridor which is within the required buffer setback, excluding areas over 30% slope, up to a maximum of 50% of the total area of the **property** which is outside the riparian corridor. (see policy 5.11.2.)

53.7 Compatible Uses With Riparian Corridors

(LCP) Allow compatible uses in and adjacent to riparian corridors that do not impair or degrade the riparian plant and animal systems, or water supply values, such as non-motorized recreation and pedestrian trails, parks, interpretive facilities and fishing facilities. Allow development in these areas only in conjunction with approval of a riparian exception.

5.2.8 Environmental Review for Riparian Corridor and Wetland Protection

(LCP) Require environmental review of all proposed development projects affecting riparian corridors or wetlands and preparation of **an Environmental Impact Report or Biotic Report for projects** which may have a significant effect on the corridors or wetlands.

53.9 Management Plans for Wetland Protection

(LCP) Require development in or adjacent to wetlands to incorporate the recommendations of a management plan which evaluates: migratory waterfowl use December 1 to April **30**; compatibility of agricultural use and biotic and water quality protection; maintenance of biologic productivity and diversity; and the permanent protection of adjoining uplands.

53.10 Development in Wetland Drainage Basins

(LCP) Require development projects in wetland drainage basins to include drainage facilities or Best Management Practices (**BMPs**) which will maintain surface runoff patterns and water quality, unless a wetland management plan specifies otherwise, and minimize erosion, sedimentation, and introduction of pollutants.

53.11 Breaching of Lagoon, River, Stream or Creek Sandbars

(LCP) Do not permit breaching of lagoon sandbars unless the breaching is consistent with an approved management plan for that wetland, river, stream, or creek system.

Programs

(Also see programs for Maintaining Surface Water Quality in section 5.8.and programs for Biological Diversity and Restoration of Damaged Sensitive Habitats in section 5.1.)

- (LCP) a. Maintain and enforce a Riparian and Wetland Protection ordinance to protect riparian corridors, wetlands, lagoons and inland lakes by avoiding to the greatest extent allowed by law the development in these areas. Maintain a resource management program (Flood Control Zone 4 or similar) to fund protection and restoration of these areas and seek to increase riparian corridor and wetland acreage over the long-term. (Responsibility: Planning Department, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)
- b. Establish a program in cooperation with the California Department of Fish and Game to identify and **revegetate disturbed** areas in riparian corridors with appropriate native species. (Responsibility: Planning Department, Flood Control Zone 4)
- (LCP) c. Cooperate with the City of Santa **Cruz** and the Harbor District in the evaluation of the **Arana Creek** Marsh and evaluate other appropriate marsh areas for rare and endangered plants and devise a **Biotic** Management Plan for their preservation. Investigate ways to return the marshes to their natural state. (Responsibility: Public Works, Port Commission, Flood Control Zone 4)
- (LCP) d. In conjunction with **AMBAG**, the City of Watsonville, and the State Water Resources **Control Board**, develop and implement a coordinated resource management plan for the Watsonville Slough system and surrounding wetlands to improve water quality and biological habitat (Responsibility: Flood Control, Public Works, **AMBAG**, City of Watsonville, and/or other appropriate agencies)
- (LCP) e. Follow the guidelines in the **Pajaro** River Corridor and Lagoon Management Plans to improve **environmental** quality of the riparian corridor and to reduce the risk of flooding to Watsonville and surrounding areas. (Responsibility: **Pajaro River Task Force**, **Public** Works, Flood Control Zone 7, Army Corps of Engineers, City of Watsonville, Board of Supervisors, Monterey County, and/or other appropriate agencies)
- f. Review site-specific recommendations in Urban Watersheds Study in connection with the design of drainage and other **improvements** and the review of development projects in or adjacent to riparian corridors within the Urban Services Line. Incorporate suggested restoration and enhancement measures where practical. Develop long-term plans to implement other suggested measures. (Responsibility: Planning Department, Public Works, Redevelopment Agency, and/or other appropriate agencies)
- (LCP) g. Prepare a map of all wetlands and wetland drainage basins in the County. Seek funding and support for development of management plans for wetlands from state and federal agencies and explore the possibility of establishing a development-funded wetland management program to prepare wetland management plans.