

89.6.1

SONOMA COUNTY



# DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

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Planning Director

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Assistant Planning Director

March 31, 1989

Mr. Nichols J. Stewart, Councilman  
City of Sebastopol  
7120 Bodega Avenue  
Sebastopol, CA 95472

Dear Mr. Stewart,

At your request, the County Planning Department has reviewed the proposed "Objectives" and "Management Guidelines" for the Laguna de Santa Rosa.

Several objectives and policies included in the recently adopted (March 1989) Sonoma County General Plan are applicable to the Laguna and the proposed management plan (see Attachment A). The fifteen objectives identified by the committee appear to be consistent with county policy. The following discussion highlights the relationship between General Plan policy and the recommended guidelines.

A.1.a. - This recommendation may be more restrictive than policy OS-5e which considers cultivation along the Laguna channel an allowable use, provided that it occurs no closer than 50' from the top of the bank. While lands adjacent to the Laguna may be designated "critical habitat areas", plan policies do not necessarily preclude mowing and disking within such areas.

A.1.b., A.2.e., and A.3.a. - These measures are more specific than county policy; however they could be addressed by the Laguna de Santa Rosa conservation program (boundaries indicated on Attachment B).

A.1.c., A.2.b., and A.2.c. - County policy does not require fencing to restrict grazing along the Laguna channel. Policy OS-5e considers grazing and similar agricultural production activities as allowable uses within the 100 foot streamside conservation area established along the Laguna (OS-5c).

A.2.a. - Depending upon the extent of vegetation removal, this recommendation may be more restrictive than OS-5e which permits vegetation removal as part of an integrated pest management program within streamside conservation areas, and OS-5h which states vegetation removal by the SCWA for maintenance purposes may be consistent with county policy.

A.2.d. - This level of detail, although not specifically set forth in county policy, would conform to the intent of preservation of the Laguna and could be incorporated into the conservation program.



B.1., C.1., and D.1. through D.4. - These recommendations call for a more restrictive level of mitigation than that set forth in general plan policies which pertain to protection of critical habitats, rare and endangered species and native oaks (RC-5c, RC-6a, RC-6b and OS-4c). However, they could be incorporated into the conservation program.

B.2. - This measure conforms to policies RC-6a and RC-6b with regard to rare and endangered species.

C.2. - Policy RC-5d states that activities such as filling that would be detrimental to the biotic resources of the Laguna should be avoided. Protection for rare and endangered species which are associated with vernal pools not designated as "critical habitat areas" on the Open Space maps will be accomplished through applicable federal and state law (RC-6b). Therefore, this measure may be more restrictive than county policy.

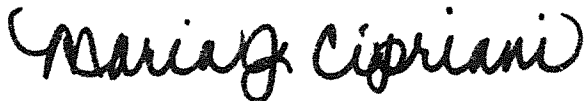
C.3. - Significant vernal pools not identified as "critical habitat areas" on the Open Space maps would require a general plan amendment to be designated and subject to "Biotic Resource" zoning.

E. - This recommendation conforms to policy RC-3d which addresses the use of treated wastewater for wildlife enhancement projects.

II. 1. through 7. - Recommendations to institute a land stewardship program for the Laguna are consistent with the intent of the proposed conservation program. However, at this time, the County has neither allocated funding for nor considered the organizational and staffing requirements discussed in II. 3. and II. 4. Again, such details could appropriately be incorporated into the conservation program.

Should you require additional information or have any questions regarding this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me at 527-2412.

Sincerely,



Maria J. Cipriani  
Planner

MJC/da

cc: File

Supervisor Ernie Carpenter  
Ken Milam, Planning Director

DN:LMCNS



Sonoma County General Plan  
Open Space Element

OSE

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- OS-3d: Establish a building setback of 20 feet along the Highway 101 Scenic Corridor in urban service areas to be reserved for landscaping. Where a sound barrier must be located along a scenic corridor, ensure that the landscaped area is visible from the highway. Cooperate with state agencies to achieve compatible goals with regard to visual quality along scenic corridors.
- OS-3e: Incorporate design criteria for scenic corridors in urban areas.
- OS-3f: Refer building permits within the setback along historic Bohemian Highway between Occidental and Freestone and Bodega Highway between Bodega and Freestone to the Sonoma County Landmarks Commission for review and recommendations.
- OS-3g: Avoid freeway oriented billboards along designated scenic corridors. Establish design criteria for consideration of new freestanding outdoor advertising structures or signs along designated scenic corridors to retain visual quality. Consider amortization of existing signs subject to the limitations of state law as a condition of approval for discretionary permits.
- OS-3h: Design public works projects to minimize tree damage and removal along scenic corridors. Where trees must be removed, design replanting programs so as to accommodate ultimate planned highway improvements. Require revegetation following grading and road cuts.
- OS-3i: Recognize Highway 116 from Highway 1 to the southern edge of Sebastopol as an official state scenic highway. Consider requesting official state scenic highway designations for Highways 1 and 37. Upon the request of local residents, the County may pursue similar state status for other scenic corridors.
- OS-3j: Consider the Bodega Bay Bypass as a scenic corridor upon completion of construction.

### 3.0 BIOTIC RESOURCES

Sonoma County is rich in plant and animal habitats which warrant protection. Primary components mapped on the open space plan maps are critical habitat areas and riparian corridors. Figure OS-3 on page 235 shows these areas.

### 3.1 POLICY FOR CRITICAL HABITAT AREAS

Certain biotic resource communities provide wildlife habitat and contribute to the quality of life in Sonoma County. These critical habitat areas are designated on Figure OS-3 and require special protection because they are highly sensitive to change and could be adversely affected by development.

Important critical habitat areas include:

- 1) Wetlands and Marshes - These are identified as critical habitats and may include, but are not limited to, tidal salt marshes and estuaries, freshwater marshes such as the Pitkin, Petaluma and Kenwood marshes, and vernal pools. Wetlands provide a habitat for many animal and plant species and serve as the base of a food chain which supports many types of fish, waterfowl and other birds and mammals. Loss of wetlands affects these species and decreases hunting, fishing, and recreational opportunities.
- 2) Other Critical Habitats - Remnants of native bunchgrasses and oak savannas represent the original vegetation of Sonoma County. Sargent Cypress Forests, Pygmy Forests, and Coastal Dunes contain rare and endangered species, are easily damaged and are difficult to reestablish. These areas may include but are not limited to preserves of the Sonoma County Land Trust, Audubon Society, Academy of Science, Nature Conservancy and Bouverie.

Goal OS-4 Identify critical habitat areas and assure that the quality of these natural resources is maintained and not adversely affected by development activities.

Objective OS-4.1: Designate important wetlands, marshes and other critical habitats and maintain low intensity land uses in these areas.

Objective OS-4.2: Establish development guidelines to protect designated critical habitat areas.

The County shall use the following policies to achieve these objectives:

OS-4a: Add a Biotic Resources combining district to the zoning ordinance.

OS-4b: Rezone to the Biotic Resources combining district any lands designated as a critical habitat area.

OS-4c: Require the preparation of a biotic resource assessment to develop mitigation measures if the Planning Director determines that a discretionary project could adversely impact a designated critical habitat area.

- OS-4d:** Establish building envelopes to avoid designated critical habitat areas on tentative maps.
- OS-4e:** Require on building permits a minimum setback of 50 feet from the edge of any wetlands which are within a critical habitat area. Exempt existing farm buildings and allow them to be expanded or modified.
- OS-4f:** Consider waiver of the setback if, after preparation of a biotic resource assessment, it is determined that applying the setback makes the parcel unbuildable or the structure is a noncommercial agricultural building and must be located adjacent to an existing farm complex for efficient farm operation.
- OS-4g:** Consider voluntary transfer of development rights (TDR) and purchase of development rights (PDR) programs and make critical habitat areas eligible with owner consent.

### 3.2 POLICY FOR RIPARIAN CORRIDORS

Areas along streams with native vegetation are referred to as riparian corridors. Diverse vegetation and the streamside environment offer insect and plant food, shelter, and nesting sites and provide a water source for birds, fish, and mammals. The plant cover regulates water, temperature and provides a nursery habitat for trout, salmon, steelhead, and other fish.

Riparian vegetation contributes to both water quantity and quality. Plants and trees serve as filters for sediment, pesticides, and fertilizers. They stabilize banks and keep soils loose and permeable, allowing aquifers along streams to be recharged. Elimination of natural plant communities along streams can increase surface run-off and siltation, which, in turn, can create a stream environment detrimental to fisheries. Riparian corridors are therefore an important part of open space.

Riparian areas can create conflicts with agricultural and urban uses. Overgrazing can remove vegetative cover. Lands along streams often contain prime cropland soils. Riparian areas can harbor insect pests and plant diseases which may infect adjacent vineyards and orchards.

**Goal OS-5** Provide protective measures for riparian corridors along selected streams which balance the need for agricultural production, urban development, timber and mining operations, and flood control with preservation of riparian values.

**Objective OS-5.1:** Classify important streams with native vegetation as "riparian corridors". Develop guidelines to protect and manage these areas as valuable resources.

The County shall use the following policies to achieve the above objective:

- OS-5a: Classify riparian corridors designated in the open space element as follows:
- 1) "Urban Riparian Corridors" include those portions of designated corridors within urban residential, commercial, industrial, or public/quasi-public land use categories.
  - 2) "Russian River Riparian Corridor" includes the corridor adjacent to any part of the Russian River which is neither located within the above urban riparian corridor nor within the jurisdiction of a city.
  - 3) "Flatland Riparian Corridors" include the corridors adjacent to any streams which flow through predominantly flat or very gently sloping land, generally with alluvial soil. This classification excludes areas covered by 1) and 2) above.
  - 4) "Upland Riparian Corridors" include the corridors adjacent to streams not included in the above three categories.
- OS-5b: Rezone to the Biotic Resources combining district any lands designated as riparian corridors.
- OS-5c: Establish streamside conservation areas, measured from the top of the higher bank as determined by the SCWA, for designated riparian corridors as follows:
- 1) Urban Riparian Corridors: 50'
  - 2) Russian River Riparian Corridor: 200'
  - 3) Flatland Riparian Corridors: 100'
  - 4) Upland Riparian Corridors: 50'
- OS-5d: Designate additional riparian corridors in specific plans, area plans, or local area development guidelines which will be subject to policies included therein.
- OS-5e: Allow or consider allowing the following uses within any streamside conservation area:
- 1) Timber operations conducted in accordance with an approved timber harvest plan.
  - 2) Streamside maintenance.
  - 3) Road crossings and street crossings, utility line crossings.
  - 4) Mining operations conducted in accordance with the County Surface Mining and Reclamation Ordinance.
  - 5) Permitted summer dams.
  - 6) Grazing and similar agricultural production activities not involving structures or cultivation, except as defined by 7) below.



- 7) Agricultural cultivation:
  - a) located no closer than 100' from the top of the bank in the "Russian River Riparian Corridor".
  - b) located no closer than 50' from the top of the bank in "flatland riparian corridors".
  - c) located no closer than 25' from the top of the bank in "upland riparian corridors".
  - d) The setbacks of 7 a), b), and c) above may be reduced through the discretionary approval process or through a plan approved by the Planning Director provided the owner includes appropriate mitigations for potential erosion, bank stabilization and biotic impacts.
- 8) Vegetation removal as part of an integrated pest management program administered by the Agricultural Commissioner.
- 9) Creekside bikeways, trails and parks within urban riparian corridors.
- 10) Development authorized by waiver under OS-5f.

OS-5f: Prohibit, except as allowed by OS-5e, structures, roads and utility lines and parking lots within any streamside conservation area. Consider waiver of this prohibition if:

- 1) it makes a lot unbuildable and vegetation removal is minimized,
- 2) no significant disturbance of riparian habitat would occur, or
- 3) the use involves only the maintenance, restoration or minor expansion of an existing structure.

A biotic resource assessment may be required prior to issuance of a waiver.

OS-5g: Review timber harvest plans adjacent to designated riparian corridors and request that clear cutting not occur within streamside conservation areas. Where clear cutting is approved by the applicable state or federal agency along designated riparian corridors, ensure that at least 50 percent of the overstory canopy and at least 50 percent of the understory vegetation be retained.

OS-5h: Use the following criteria to determine whether or not public projects are consistent with this element:

- 1) Non-emergency Water Agency projects which include significant streambank modification are not consistent. Refer plans for vegetation removal for maintenance purposes to the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) for review.

- 2) Roadway and utility construction should seek to minimize and mitigate, where feasible, damage to riparian areas. Minimize vegetation removal for necessary stream crossings.
- 3) All criteria established in policy OS-5f.
- 4) Grading, filling or construction shall not substantially diminish or divert any stream flow or result in any substantial increase in bank instability or erosion.

In the event that the above criteria cannot be met, a public project may be found consistent with this element if there is an overriding net public benefit.

OS-5i: Refer discretionary permits along undesignated streams to the SCWA and the DFG as part of the environmental review process.

#### 4.0 OUTDOOR RECREATION

Open space for outdoor recreation, including parks, equestrian and hiking trails, and bicycle routes, provides pleasure and enjoyment for County residents. The Public Facilities and Services Element contains a detailed analysis of parkland needs and implementation measures. Figures OS-4a and 4b on pages 243 and 247 show designated outdoor recreation areas.

##### 4.1 POLICY FOR PARKS AND EQUESTRIAN AND HIKING TRAILS

As of 1986, hiking and riding trails were primarily confined to parklands and to Coastal access trails within the Sea Ranch Subdivision. A trail system plan developed by the Sonoma County Regional Parks Department links various parks and expands hiking and riding opportunities. The trail plan is not a trail users guide but a plan for securing lands for a countywide trail system. Many property owners, especially those engaged in agriculture, are concerned about trespassing, liability, and damage if hikers release farm animals or bring unleashed dogs. Funding the acquisition and maintenance of trails is also an issue.

**Goal OS-7 Establish a countywide park and trail system which meets future recreational needs of the county's residents while protecting agricultural uses. The emphasis of the trail system should be near urban areas and on public lands.**

**Objective OS-7.1:** Provide for adequate parklands and trails primarily in locations that are convenient to urban areas to meet the outdoor recreation needs of the population, while not affecting agricultural uses.

The County shall use the following policies to achieve this objective:

OS-7a: Apply the "Public-Quasi Public/Park" designation to all existing local, county, and state parklands.

**Objective RC-5.1:** Identify and encourage protection of areas with important wildlife habitats and woodland resources.

**Objective RC-5.2:** Encourage the use of native plants in landscaping to reduce the risk of introducing exotic plant species into wildlife areas.

**Objective RC-5.3:** Recognize and preserve the Laguna de Santa Rosa and the San Pablo Bay area as biotic resource areas and historic water retention basins of particular significance to Sonoma County's environment.

In addition to the policies of the Land Use and Open Space Elements, the following policies shall be used to carry out these objectives:

- RC-5a:** Apply the "Resources and Rural Development" land use category where it is the County's intent to manage and conserve natural resources, including wildlife and vegetation habitats while allowing a compatible level of residential development.
- RC-5b:** On discretionary projects, use native or compatible non native species to the extent possible for landscaping. Discourage use of exotics, such as pampas grass and scotch broom.
- RC-5c:** Make the preservation of significant native oaks and other native trees a primary consideration in the review of development projects.
- RC-5d:** Develop comprehensive programs for preservation and restoration of the Laguna de Santa Rosa as shown on Figures RC-2c, 2d, 2e, and 2f on pages 299 - 305 and for the San Pablo Bay Area as shown on Figures RC-2h and RC-2i on pages 309 - 311. Include mechanisms for preservation and enhancement such as acquisition, zoning and easements. Avoid activities such as filling, grading or construction that would be detrimental to the biotic resources or historic water retention functions of these areas.
- RC-5e:** Encourage landowners to voluntarily participate in the County's Landmark Tree Program.

## 5.2 PROTECTION OF RARE AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

Small populations of plants and animals which are in danger of extinction due to the loss or alteration of habitat are protected by state and federal law. These species are highly sensitive to any change in their habitat and could be adversely impacted by development. Rare and endangered plant and animals species frequently provide essential links in the natural ecosystem.

**Goal RC-6** Identify and protect rare and endangered species and their environment.

Objective RC-6.1: Identify the locations of rare and endangered plants and animals.

Objective RC-6.2: Require that any development on lands containing rare and endangered species be done in a manner which protects the resource or mitigates adverse impacts.

The County shall use the following policies in addition to those of the Open Space Element, to achieve the above objectives:

RC-6a: Maintain and update the "Biotic Resource" data maps which show the locations of known rare and endangered species, and use them in the environmental review process for development permits.

RC-6b: Protection for rare and endangered species, wetlands, and other biotic resources not indicated on Figure OS-3 on page 235 shall be accomplished through compliance with applicable state and federal law.

RC-6c: Notwithstanding the densities shown on the land use maps, provide for creation of separate parcels of land where necessary to establish sites for the preservation of rare and endangered species and other biotic resources.

## 6.0 FISHERY RESOURCES

### 6.1 PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF MARINE FISHERY AND HARBOR RESOURCES

Sonoma County contains marine and inland fisheries and a growing aquaculture industry. Bodega Harbor is the home of a major commercial fishing fleet with berth installations, boat launching ramps, fish receiving piers, a navigation channel and a marina. Commercial and sport fishing net salmon, crab, herring, halibut, shark and bottom fish.

Oil exploration and drilling along the coast may adversely affect sensitive areas identified in the Local Coastal Plan. Streams and estuaries serve as nurseries and habitats for commercial fish species and are especially vulnerable to damage by an oil spill. Offshore activities such as oil platforms, pipelines, and tankers could interfere with commercial fishing activities. Ocean disposal of wastewater could also adversely affect nursery areas and the commercial fishing industry.

Goal RC-7 Protect and conserve the quality of ocean, marine and estuarine environments for their scenic, economic and environmental values.

Objective RC-7.1: Promote protection for the native marine and shoreline plant and animal communities along the Pacific coastline and San Pablo Bay shoreline.

**Resource Conservation Program 3: Laguna de Santa Rosa Conservation Program**

**Program Description:** Prepare a comprehensive program for preservation and restoration of the Laguna de Santa Rosa to include the area indicated on Figures RC-2c through -2f. Recognize and identify activities which could adversely impact the area's biotic resource and historic water retention functions. Include appropriate mechanisms for its preservation and enhancement.

**Resource Conservation Program 4: San Pablo Bay Area Conservation Program**

**Program Description:** Prepare a comprehensive program for preservation and restoration of the San Pablo Bay Area to include the area indicated on Figure RC-2h and RC-2i. Coordinate with the appropriate agencies to maintain land use activities which are compatible with the area's biotic resource and historic water retention functions. Identify mechanisms to ensure its preservation and enhancement, including seasonal wetland and freshwater marsh reclamation.



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Figure RC-2e

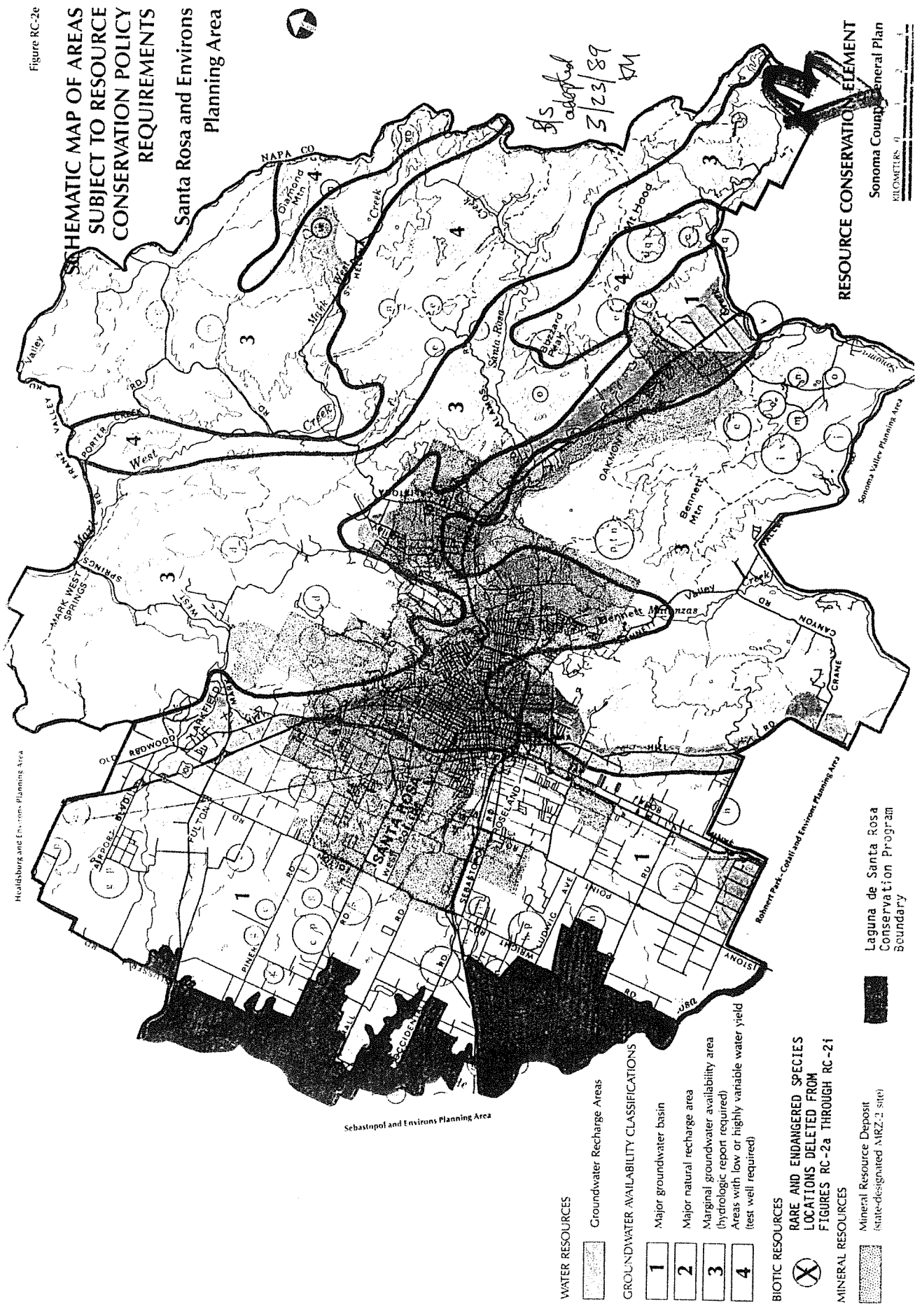


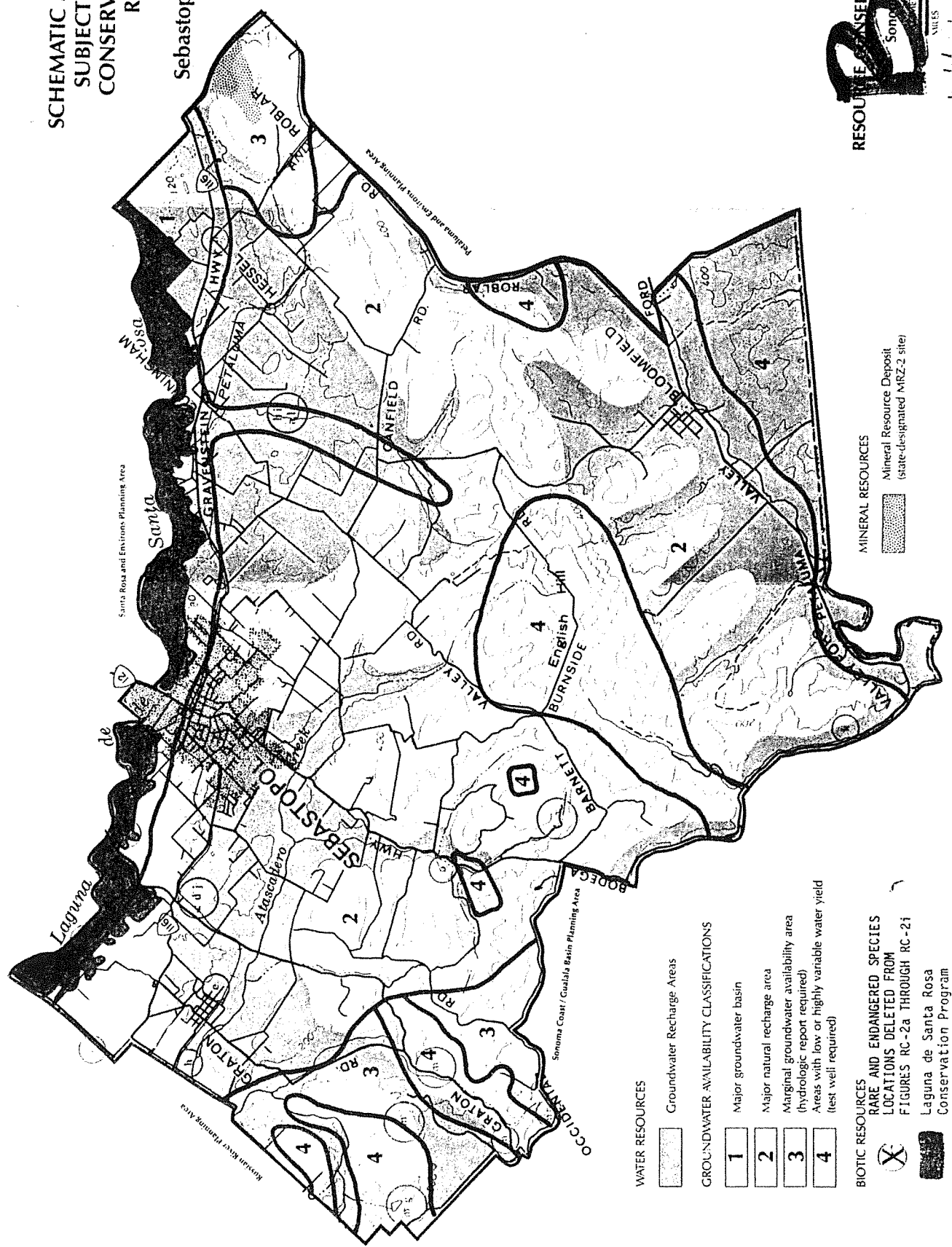




Figure RC-21

SCHEMATIC MAP OF AREA  
SUBJECT TO RESOURCE  
CONSERVATION POLICY  
REQUIREMENTS

Sebastopol and Environs  
Planning Area



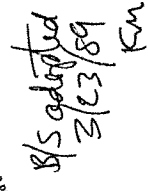
RESOURCE CONSERVATION ELEMENT

Sonoma County General Plan

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KILOMETERS  
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MILES



## Russian River Planning Area



RESOURCE CONSERVATION AGENCY

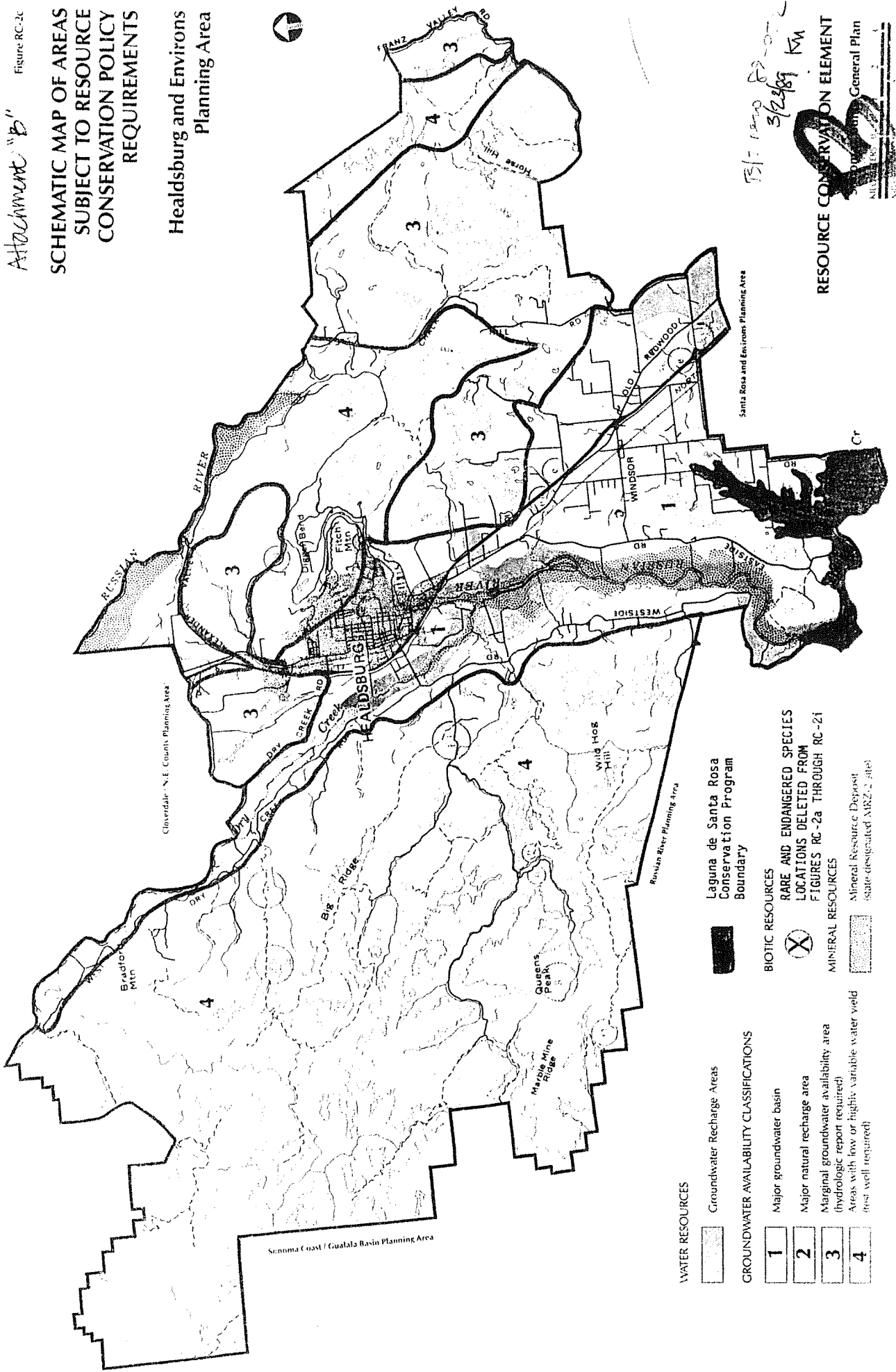
**Sonoma County General Plan**

3714

Laguna de Santa Rosa  
Conservation Program  
Boundary



Attachment "B"  
Figure RC-2c  
SCHEMATIC MAP OF AREAS  
SUBJECT TO RESOURCE  
CONSERVATION POLICY  
REQUIREMENTS  
Healdsburg and Environs  
Planning Area



TS/ 12-20 89-0-2  
3/22/89 KM  
RESOURCE CONSERVATION ELEMENT  
General Plan  
ALLEGES

