

SECTION 4.7

OPEN SPACE/ RECREATION ELEMENT

The Open Space/Recreation Element of the *Pinetop-Lakeside/Navajo County Regional Plan* is presented in the following sections:

- 4.7.1 Introduction
- 4.7.2 Importance of Open Space
- 4.7.3 Definition of Open Space
- 4.7.4 Inventory of Important Open Space/Recreational Areas
- 4.7.5 Park and Recreation Standards
- 4.7.6 Open Space/Recreation Goals, Objectives, Evaluation Measures, Policies, and Programs
- 4.7.7 Open Space/Recreation Implementation Program

The introduction will examine the purpose and the legislative intent of the Open Space/Recreation Element, with a focus on the changes instituted by the Growing Smarter legislation. The importance of Open Space will be examined, as will the definition of Open Space. The existing setting will explore the implications that the existing land use pattern and future population growth will have on the development of the community and the preparation of the Open Space/Recreation Plan and will provide an inventory of open space and recreational amenities available within the Study Area. Next, standards for different types of recreational activities will be presented and compared with the existing inventory. This will provide an overview of whether the activity enjoys a surplus or has a deficit. Prior to an overview of the Open Space/Recreation Implementation Program, the Open Space/Recreation goals, objectives, evaluation measures, policies and programs will be highlighted.

4.7.1 INTRODUCTION

An Open Space Element is one of the four new mandated elements of the Growing Smarter legislation for communities larger than 2,500 inhabitants. An Open Space Element is only required for counties with populations larger than 200,000 persons. As a result, the

Open Space Element is required for the Town of Pinetop-Lakeside and is optional for Navajo County. For municipalities in Arizona, ARS §9-461.05 stipulates that an Open Space Element should include:

- ❑ A comprehensive inventory of open space areas, recreational resources and designations of access points to open space areas and resources.
- ❑ An analysis of forecasted needs, policies for managing and protecting open space areas and resources and implementation strategies to acquire additional open space areas and further establish recreational resources.
- ❑ Policies and implementation strategies designed to promote a regional system of integrated open space and recreational resources and a consideration of any existing regional open space plans.

A Recreation Element is not required under state statutes for either the Town of Pinetop-Lakeside or Navajo County. Only communities larger than 50,000 people are required to provide a Recreation Element, which should show “a comprehensive system of areas and public sites for recreation.” However, since recreation is mentioned as a component of the Open Space Element, the *Pinetop-Lakeside/Navajo County Regional Plan* has integrated the optional Recreation Element into the required Open Space Element to produce the Open Space/Recreation Element.

4.7.2 IMPORTANCE OF OPEN SPACE

In general, open space is important because it enhances the quality of life, has important economic implications, helps promote tourism, and provides recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. There are also ethical and moral considerations related to protecting wildlife and its habitat and preserving non-renewable resources for future generations. Finally, open space also has an intrinsic value that cannot be quantified, but is every bit as important as any of the more quantifiable components described above. A brief overview of each of these elements is provided below.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Most people realize that the presence and protection of natural areas and wildlife improves the quality of their lives. For example, it is well known that natural open spaces, as opposed to buildings and other impervious areas, help reduce the “heat island” impact of urban areas and also reduces smog and air pollution. From another perspective, view lots and lots fronting on natural green-space, such as meadows, streams, usually have an economic value higher than lots without these environmental amenities. This is a

monetary reflection of the fact that people place a high intrinsic value on open space and the natural environment. Additionally, the Ponderosa Pine forest provides a strong visual identity and contributes to a “sense of place or community” which inspires strong feelings in many people living in the Study Area. Also, for those people who enjoy wildlife and an alpine lifestyle, the presence of bears, elk and raccoons, to name just a few, add an immeasurable amount to their quality of life.

RECREATIONAL VALUE

The protection and preservation of natural areas, such as mountain ridges, creeks, and other riparian areas, contributes substantially to the recreational opportunities available to residents of the Study Area. Bird-watching, photography, archaeology, jogging, hiking, biking, horseback riding, fishing, and hunting, are only a few of the many recreational activities that depend on the availability of natural open space. The Ponderosa Pine forest and the rugged terrain traversing much of the Study Area provide abundant opportunities for all types of recreational activities.

ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE

As noted above, open space has site-specific economic implications in that lots with natural amenities usually will command a higher price than those without such amenities. Subdivisions that are well planned with ample open space and recreational amenities are able to command premium prices relative to haphazard developments with little or no emphasis on preserving open space. Additionally, the economic importance of hiking, hunting and fishing is significant in Arizona and make a significant contribution to the local economy.

Open space also has a natural system value when it provides direct benefits to human society through such processes as ground water storage, climate moderation, flood control, storm damage prevention, and air and water pollution abatement.

Open space preservation also has a specific economic development importance. Many visitors, companies, and new residents move to Arizona because of the beauty and uniqueness of the natural environment.

ETHICAL AND MORAL CONSIDERATIONS

Although it is sometimes difficult to imagine, at one time, millions of bison roamed the Great Plains of the United States. Loss of habitat and senseless exploitation nearly resulted in the extermination of this magnificent animal. History is replete with examples of

man-caused extinctions or near extinctions of many species of animals. Edward LaRoe, of the National Biological Service has noted that:

Extinction is natural; it naturally occurs as newer forms of life evolve. But under the forces of population growth, technology and special interests, humans have driven the rate of extinction today to about 100 times the natural rate. Even worse, the rate of extinction is still increasing and will be 100 to 1,000 times faster yet in the next 55 years.

The vibrant Ponderosa Pine forest is home to many magnificent creatures, such as coyotes, bears, mountain lions, bobcats, raccoons, skunks and numerous birds. However, their numbers are threatened with an increase in development and a loss of habitat. Many people are concerned about the implications of increasing development on wildlife, as well as the implications that the vanishing forest will have on the quality of life for future generations of Arizonans'.

EDUCATIONAL IMPORTANCE

By preserving riparian areas and significant amounts of open space, the conservation of these natural areas will contribute to a better understanding of the interrelationships between urban development and natural areas. It will also enable students to study the ecology of the Ponderosa Pine forest, as well as wildlife and its habitats. The conservation of important historic sites in the Study Area will promote and encourage further study into the lifestyles of the original inhabitants of this area and will promote the study of archaeology and its related disciplines.

INTRINSIC VALUE

Although not easy, and perhaps impossible, to quantify, open space preservation also has intrinsic social, cultural, and spiritual values that differ with every person. Open space provides some people with a sense of freedom and others with a sense of solitude and inspiration. The qualitative value of open space was expressed by Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright, whose love of the natural environment is well established, noted that, "Nature is my manifestation of God. I go to nature every day for inspiration in the day's work. I follow in building the principles which nature has used in its domain."

4.7.3 DEFINITION OF OPEN SPACE

During several community workshops, questions were asked about the definition of open space. The answer can be as simple as defining open space as any undeveloped land. Further refinements can add the notion that it is any undeveloped land that is suitable for conservation or passive recreational uses.

The California State Government Code is instructive because it also provides four categories or purposes served by open space. The California Code defines open space as “any parcel or area of land or water which is essentially unimproved and devoted to an open-space use and which is designated on a local, regional or state open-space plan as any of the following:

- ❑ **OPEN SPACE FOR THE PRESERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES** including, but not limited to, areas required for the preservation of plant and animal life, including habitat for fish and wildlife species; areas required for ecologic and other scientific study purposes; rivers, streams, bays and estuaries; and coastal beaches, lakeshores, banks of rivers and streams, and watershed lands.
- ❑ **OPEN SPACE USED FOR THE MANAGED PRODUCTION OF RESOURCES**, including but not limited to, forest lands, rangeland, agricultural lands and areas of economic importance for the production of food or fiber; areas required for recharge of ground water basins; bays, estuaries, marshes, rivers and streams which are important for the management of commercial fisheries; and areas containing major mineral deposits, including those in short supply.
- ❑ **OPEN SPACE FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION**, including but not limited to, areas of outstanding scenic, historic and cultural value; areas particularly suited for park and recreation purposes, including access to lakeshores, beaches, and rivers and streams; and areas which serve as links between major recreation and open-space reservations, including utility easements, banks of rivers and streams, trails and scenic highway corridors.
- ❑ **OPEN SPACE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY**, including but not limited to, areas which require special management or regulation because of hazardous or special conditions such as earthquake fault zones, unstable soil areas, floodplains, watersheds, areas presenting high fire risks, areas required for the protection of water quality and water reservoirs, and areas required for the protection and enhancement of air quality.

4.7.4 INVENTORY OF IMPORTANT OPEN SPACE/RECREATIONAL AREAS

Surrounded by the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest, the Town of Pinetop-Lakeside and the surrounding unincorporated areas in Navajo County have an abundance of open space. The U.S. Forest Service owns several important pieces of land within the Town limits, which provide critical areas for regional recreation. The most important of these areas are described below.

JACQUES MARSH

Jacques Marsh is a man-made wetland located on U.S. Forest Service land that is a component of the wastewater management system of the Pinetop-Lakeside Sanitary District. It is the result of a cooperative effort between the U.S. Forest Service, the Arizona Game and Fish Department, and the Pinetop-Lakeside Sanitary District. The marsh was constructed in an area with no historical ponds, lakes or wetlands. However, once established, the marsh closely resembles a natural wetland in terms of plants and wildlife present at the site.

In response to surface and groundwater contamination in the community, the Pinetop-Lakeside Sanitary District was formed in 1973 to clean up these waters. With the assistance of an EPA construction grant, the wastewater collection system, a two million-gallon per day (GPD) secondary treatment plant, and Jacques Marsh were completed in 1980. The 127 acres of marsh and ponds currently receive about one million gallons of treated wastewater per day. The perimeter of the areas is fenced to keep out domestic livestock. A series of “V” shaped nesting islands are included in each of the seven ponds and provide nesting sites, which are safe from predators, such as skunks and coyotes.

Jacques Marsh has quickly become an important wildlife habitat and the site hosts bald eagles, peregrine falcons, and numerous species of ducks. Elk are attracted to the marsh in the fall and winter. A significant side benefit of the Marsh has been the opportunity for interaction with local schools. The Marsh serves as an outdoor classroom where many environmental principles are taught, including recycling and water cleanup.

BILLY CREEK DRAINAGE

Another environmentally sensitive area is the Billy Creek drainage, which includes USFS land, Blue Ridge District property, and private lands. The Billy Creek drainage conveys water not diverted across Highway 260 into Walnut Creek, via underground culverts controlled by the Show Low irrigation district. Consequently, animal and plant species along the drainage area are impacted by the reduction in natural runoff. Much of Billy Creek is defined as a 100-year floodplain under FEMA. Septic systems discharging into the drainage from adjacent residential properties were a major source of pollution until sanitary sewer was extended into the area.

Although there are private holdings blocking access to many areas along the western side of drainage, there is USFS land to the east. The potential exists for a public access trail or park along the drainage, however, an attempt in the past to utilize state grant funds for a park was dropped due to the opposition of some property owners.

BIG SPRINGS ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY AREA

Big Springs Environmental Study Area is a 40-acre natural area located in the Town of Pinetop-Lakeside. It has been developed as an outdoor learning area for use by local schools, the community and visitors to the White Mountains. The Arizona Game and Fish Department, the Blue Ridge School District, the Town of Pinetop-Lakeside, and the U.S. Forest Service have cooperated to make Big Springs a quality outdoor learning area. Big Springs was developed to promote an aggressive environmental education program for the White Mountains. It stresses outdoor learning activities, which increase appreciation and awareness of the rich natural history of the White Mountains. The Study Area contains a ½ mile improved loop trail with numerous interpretative trail signs. Two streams and a spring-fed pond are found at Big Springs. Numerous species of wildlife can be observed at Big Springs, including skunks, squirrels, muskrats, beavers and raccoons.

WOODLAND LAKE PARK AND WOODLAND LAKE PARK FOREST AREA

Woodland Lake Park and Woodland Lake Park Forest Area is a 580-acre area in the Town of Pinetop-Lakeside. The park is owned by the U.S. Forest Service and maintained and operated by the Town under a use permit. The park consists of several areas. About 73 acres have been improved by the Town and contains Woodland Lake. Surrounding the lake are picnic ramadas, a children's playground, and a loop trail. The developed portion of the park also has baseball and soccer fields. With the exception of the school district's athletic facilities and those owned by the LDS Church on Hansen Lane, Woodland Lake Park is the only developed recreational area serving the community. As such, it is a very important facility for the Town.

The northern part of the park accommodates more passive recreational uses and is used for hiking, bird watching, and other similar types of activities. It connects directly to the Big Springs Environmental Study Area.

A major issue confronting the community is the continued availability of this open space/recreational area. Under its land evaluation procedures, the Forest Service has identified Woodland Park as land not meeting USFS standards for inclusion in the National Forest System. Current policy dictates that USFS owned land not meeting the criteria for NFS inclusion be sold at market value based on "highest and best" use. In the Town of Pinetop-Lakeside "highest and best" use is defined as commercial and/or residential

development. The appraised value of Woodland Park under this criteria is beyond the town's financial capacity. To prevent the immediate disposal of the park, the Town, through Arizona's congressional delegation has obtained temporary veto power over any sale of the land to a private developer. Over the long term, the Town would like to negotiate a transfer of the property based on its current-use value, with an option to acquire portions as funding becomes available.

CIVIC CENTER PARK

Located at 1360 N. Niels Hansen Lane, this park has one practice softball field. The park is also home to the community gym and has two indoor classrooms.

FESTIVAL PARK

This site is used to conduct some of the major festivals the Chamber of Commerce sponsors each year, such as the Blue Grass Festival, the Fall Festival, and the Native American Festival. The Town owns 50 acres of land at this site that is available for future community and parkland development. The Town recently received a grant from the Heritage Fund to construct some multi-use fields at the site.

4.7.5 PARK AND RECREATION STANDARDS

In 1998, the Town of Pinetop-Lakeside adopted the *Outdoor Recreation Masterplan*. As a component of the plan, a series of community goals were established for various types of recreational activities. These goals are listed in Table 4.7-1, *Pinetop-Lakeside Recreation Inventory and Evaluation*. The goal establishes the desired level of service for each activity, based upon recommended guidelines developed by the National Recreation and Park Association. For instance, for picnicking, a community goal of 1 table for every 500 residents was established. Based on a peak season high of 25,000 people, the standard suggests that the community needs 50 picnic tables to comply with the goal. The next column lists the actual inventory of the activity items, which for picnic tables, was 30 tables. The final column indicates whether the community is meeting the activity goal. The result will either be a surplus, a deficiency or an equilibrium. Surplus facilities depicted in Table 4.7-1 are shown in bold print. As might be anticipated, the community has a surplus in hiking and cross-country skiing trails, walking paths, and has an abundance of horseback riding trails. Shortages exist for a number of more active recreational uses, such as baseball diamonds, soccer fields, volleyball courts and tennis courts.

**TABLE 4.7-1
PINETOP-LAKESIDE RECREATION INVENTORY AND EVALUATION**

Activity	Goal (per population)*	Standard	Inventory	Deficiency or Surplus
Picnicking	1 Table/500 1 Shelter/3,500	50 Tables 7 Shelter	30 Tables 5 Shelters	20 Tables 2 Shelters
Multi-Use Area	30 Acres/25,000	30 Acres	200 Acres	170 Acres
Walking Paths	1 Mile/3,000	8.5 Miles	12 Miles	3.5 Miles
Amphitheatres	1 Theater/25,000	1 Theater	0	1 Theater
Fishing	1 Lake/25,000	1 Lake	1 Lake	0
Swimming	1 Pool/5,000	1 Pool	1 Pool	0
Playground	1 Playground/2,000	12 Playgrounds	6 Playgrounds	6 Playgrounds
Bicycling	1 Mile/2,000	12 Miles	0	12 Miles
Boating	1 Ramp/150 Acres of Water	1 Ramp	1 Ramp	0
Horseback Riding	1 Mile/6,250	4 Miles	92 Miles	88 Miles
Softball/Baseball	1 Diamond/2,500	10 Diamonds	7 Diamonds	3 Diamonds
Soccer	1 Field/4,000	6 Fields	3 Fields	3 Fields
Basketball	1 Court/1,000	6 Courts**	4 Courts	2 Courts
Volleyball	1 Court/5,000	5 Courts	1 Court	4 Courts
Tennis	1 Court/5,000	5 Courts	2 Courts	3 Courts
Jogging/Running	1 Mile/7,5000	2 Miles	12 Miles	10 Miles
Skateboarding	1 Facility/25,000	1 Facility	0	1 Facility
Hiking	1 Mile/3,000	8 Miles	200 Miles	192 Miles
Cross Country Ski	1 Mile/3,000	8 Miles	200 Miles	192 Miles
Ice Skating	1 Facility/25,000	1 Facility	0	1 Facility
Urban Trail System	1 Mile/2,000	12.5 Miles	0	12.5 Miles

Source: Outdoor Recreation Masterplan, 1998

*Based on High Season Population of 25,000

**Based on Low Season Population of 6,000

4.7.6 OPEN SPACE GOALS, OBJECTIVES, EVALUATION MEASURES, POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

GOAL

To provide a series of open space areas throughout the community to enhance the quality of life, protect the environment, and provide a mixture of active and passive recreational opportunities.

OBJECTIVE 1

Make open space a critical part of residential development.

EVALUATION MEASURE: Number of acres set aside as open space or ratio of open space to developed areas.

POLICY: Require all residential subdivisions to set aside open space.

POLICY: Encourage cluster development via Planned Development in order to preserve open space.

PROGRAM: Amend Town and County Subdivision Ordinances (within the regional planning area) to require a specific percentage of land for open space.

OBJECTIVE 2

Integrate key open space areas in the community through a network of linear pedestrian/bicycle paths.

EVALUATION MEASURE: Miles of trails/bicycle paths established to open space areas.

POLICY: Establish incentives or require subdivision development to provide bicycle and pedestrian trails and to connect to existing networks outside of the development.

POLICY: Encourage open space as a buffer between incompatible land uses.

PROGRAM: Require medium to high-density residential developments to provide open space and recreational areas.

OBJECTIVE 3

To create a sense of visual open space along Highway 260

POLICY: Encourage development of site plans that promote open space and the preservation of trees on SR 260.

PROGRAM: Establish local land trust for the acquisition of small parcels of land along SR260, and within the regional planning area, for the purpose of conservation, open space, and parks.

PROGRAM: Amend the Town and County Zoning Ordinances to require landscaped parking, side lot or rear lot parking, open space preservation and tree protection within the regional planning area.

OBJECTIVE 4

Preserve and expand existing open space and recreation areas.

EVALUATION MEASURE: Total acres of existing open space.

EVALUATION MEASURE: Additional recreation facilities added to the community's inventory and/or facilities renovated.

POLICY: In conjunction with the state delegation, continue discussions with the U.S. Forest Service in order to establish a plan for the acquisition of Woodland Lake Park and Big Springs Environmental Study Area.

POLICY: Encourage the U.S. Forest Service to incorporate open space preservation as a component of their land exchange program.

POLICY: Work with the state to obtain funding for recreational and open space programs.

POLICY: Work with the State to obtain funding to renovate facilities at Woodland Lake Park.

PROGRAM: Establish an Overlay Zoning District to protect Billy Creek, Walnut Creek, and Scott's Creek from development encroachment.

PROGRAM: Establish a Town-County commission to study and examine options for acquiring additional parkland throughout the regional planning area.

PROGRAM: Utilize Heritage Fund grant and Town revenues to develop recreation facilities at the Festival Site.

4.7.7 OPEN SPACE/RECREATION ELEMENT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

A key component of the *Pinetop-Lakeside/Navajo County Regional Plan* is the Implementation Plan, which is illustrated in Table 4.7-2, *Implementation Plan: Open Space Element*, for each element of the Plan. The Open Space/Recreation Element Implementation Program includes:

- ❑ **IMPLEMENTATION MEASURE:** Provides a description of the action, program, or strategy.
- ❑ **PURPOSE:** Identifies the intent of accomplishing each implementation measure.
- ❑ **POLICY REFERENCE:** Identifies the particular policy that the implementation measure addresses.
- ❑ **TIME FRAME:** Establishes the target years, in short-, mid- and long-term increments, for implementation in the first twenty years of the planning horizon.
- ❑ **KEY PARTICIPANTS:** Identifies the appropriate public or private body, agency, group or individual responsible for the implementation measure.

**TABLE 4.7-2
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN: OPEN SPACE ELEMENT**

Implementation Measure	Lead Agency	Support Agency	Timeframe Years			Budget/Resources	Purpose
			1-5	6-10	11-20		
1. Amend Town and County Subdivision Ordinances to require open space in the regional planning area.	Town and County Planning Commissions	Town Council and Board of Supervisors	◆			Town and County Staff	Aesthetics; Provision of Open Space; Quality of Life
2. Require medium to high density residential developments to provide open space and recreational areas.	Town and County Planning Commissions	Town Council and Board of Supervisors	◆			Town and County Staff	Aesthetics; Provision of Open Space; Quality of Life
3. Purchase small parcels of land along SR260 for the purpose of conservation, open space, and parks.	Town Council and Board of Supervisors	Town and County Planning Commissions		◆		Town and County Staff, ADOT Enhancement Funds	Aesthetics; Provision of Open Space; Quality of Life
4. Amend the Town and County Zoning Ordinances to require landscaped parking, side lot or rear lot parking, open space preservation and tree protection.	Town and County Planning Commissions	Town Council and Board of Supervisors	◆			Town and County Staff	Aesthetics; Provision of Open Space; Quality of Life
5. Establish an Overlay Zoning District to protect Billy Creek and Walnut Creek from development encroachment	Town and County Planning Commissions	Town Council and Board of Supervisors	◆			Town and County Staff	Aesthetics; Provision of Open Space; Quality of Life
6. Commission a study to examine options for acquiring additional parkland.	Parks and Recreation Dept.	Town Council and Board of Supervisors	◆			Town and County Staff	Recreation; Quality of Life
7. Utilize Heritage Fund grant and Town revenues to develop recreation facilities at the Festival Site.	Parks and Recreation Dept.	Town Council and Board of Supervisors	◆			Heritage Fund; Town budget and Staff	Recreation; Quality of Life; Youth Activities

