

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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EL DORADO

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 24, 2007
TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Peter N. Maurer, Principal Planner
SUBJECT: Revised Draft Oak Woodland Management Plan

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive staff presentation and copies of the Draft Oak Woodland Management Plan (OWMP).

BACKGROUND

Attached is the revised Draft Oak Woodland Management Plan (OWMP) as directed by the Board of Supervisors on October 2, 2007. On October 11, 2007, a review of the Draft OWMP was scheduled before your Commission in anticipation that the Board would approve the release of the public review draft of the plan. This action was continued to October 30, 2007 by the Board, and your Commission responded by continuing your review of the draft document to October 25, 2007.

Planning Services staff has pared down the document to a basic, nuts and bolts approach that identifies the following:

- Location of Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs);
- Draft Conservation Fund (Option B) fee amount;
- Applicability and exceptions to the requirements;
- Responsibilities of individual property owners with regard to oak woodland protection measures, including alternative mitigation; and
- A step-by-step user guide.

The Draft OWMP also contains a brief introduction, summarizing the goals and objectives of the plan, description of oak woodland types in El Dorado County, and contextual background with regard to state law. Background information, including the details of how the mapping was accomplished, development of the fee, and the information necessary to make the County's

landowners and organizations eligible for grants from the State is contained in a series of appendices, also attached.

DISCUSSION

At the Board of Supervisors hearing on October 2, 2007, the Board reviewed a revised map showing the Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs) along with the map that had previously been presented in June, 2007. Staff also provided a revised figure for the Conservation Fund (Option B) fee, reducing the proposed amount from \$14,000 per acre of oak woodland canopy removed to \$7,300. Staff further indicated that that it was working on a modified draft of the OWMP that would shift much of the background and support information to technical appendices, providing a shortened, more manageable document for the public to use.

Staff has met with interested community members, and we believe that with the exception of a few details, there is general consensus regarding the direction of the OWMP. These details are policy decisions that need to be made by the Board:

- Amount of the Conservation Fund Fee – Staff is conducting further research on the appropriate amount of the fee, which will be sufficient to acquire and manage oak woodland conservation easements. The range is from about \$3000 up to the \$7300 proposed.
- Ratio of fee in-lieu of on-site replacement – Under Option A the amount of oak woodland canopy removed must be replaced on-site at a 1:1 ratio. Staff is recommending that payment of the fee could be substituted for the on-site replacement. Some have suggested that should be at a 1:1 ratio. Due to habitat loss and fragmentation issues, staff recommends that it be at a 2:1 ratio.
- Agricultural Cultivation or Operations – The agricultural industry has proposed that all agricultural operations, including any associated structures, be included in the exemption under Policy 7.4.4.4. Because the policy clearly states that the exemption is for cultivation, staff believes that expanding the exemption to include operations might necessitate a general plan amendment.

Listed below are a few of the more significant changes from the Draft OWMP presented to the Board on September 25, 2007:

- Reduced in size from 81 to 11 pages. (Note: Much of the background and support information was moved to Appendix A, which was created to provide the information necessary to comply with the California Wildlife Conservation Board program standards);
- Conservation Fund (Option B) fee reduced from \$14,000 to \$7,300 per acre of oak woodland canopy removed, based on elimination of restoration activities and putting the focus on acquisition, management, and monitoring of conservation easements on rural lands only;
- Modified the exhibit showing the PCAs by removing the corridors, but showing existing publicly owned lands;
- Clarified exemptions for defensible space and fire safe vegetation removal;
- Added reductions for affordable housing;
- Provided a step-by-step guide describing how the OWMP applies to development projects;

- Provided an exhibit that shows existing connectivity between PCAs based on public land, stream setback requirements, and the General Plan Important Biological Corridor (IBC) overlay designation; and
- Established a method to implement Option B of Policy 7.4.4.4.

The next steps will be to begin formal public review and preparation of the appropriate CEQA document. We anticipate preparing a negative declaration. The time frame for completion, public notice, and return for final recommendation by your Commission will take us into early next year. During that time staff will be refining the maps to correlate the PCA layer and other data with the County's parcel base.