

Katherine Douglas

General Public Comment

From: Otis Calef <crahtac@explore-santa-barbara-county.com>
Sent: Wednesday, July 1, 2026 3:26 PM
To: Harris, Julie
Cc: Plowman, Lisa; Jeffrey Lindgren; Villalobos, David; sbcob; Teralyn Evans-Gutiérrez
Subject: Comment Letter | Draft Open Space Element Update
Attachments: CRAHTAC-Draft-County-Open Space Update-Comments-06-30-26.pdf

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Dear Ms. Harris,

The Santa Barbara County Riding and Hiking Trails Advisory Committee (CRAHTAC) is writing regarding the preliminary draft Open Space Element. We greatly appreciate the Element team's presentation to CRAHTAC at our May 2026 meeting and wish to thank the County for proceeding with the long-overdue update to the Open Space Element.

Based on this presentation and the available materials, we have attached a letter with several comments for your review.

Sincerely,



Otis Calef

Chair

CRAHTAC | County Riding and Hiking Trails Advisory Committee

805.708.5009 | [website](#)

The County Riding and Hiking Trails Advisory Committee (CRAHTAC) was established by the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors in an advisory capacity to review programs, policies, and procedures affecting county recreational riding and hiking and their use.



CRAHTAC

COUNTY RIDING AND HIKING TRAILS ADVISORY COMMITTEE



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John Karamitsos

5th DISTRICT
Galilea Acosta

STAFF
Jeffery Lindgren

June 30, 2026
Submitted via email

Ms. Julie Harris, Senior Planner
Santa Barbara County Planning & Development Department
123 E Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

RE: Draft Open Space Element Update

Dear Ms. Harris:

The Santa Barbara County Riding and Hiking Trails Advisory Committee (CRAHTAC) is writing regarding the preliminary draft Open Space Element. We greatly appreciate the Element team's presentation to CRAHTAC at our May 2026 meeting and wish to thank the County for proceeding with the long-overdue update to the Open Space Element. Based on this presentation and available materials, we have a number of comments.

As you are aware, CRAHTAC is a standing committee appointed by the Board of Supervisors to advocate for recreational trails and related parks and open space and advise the County on matters related to these recreational issues. CRAHTAC is typically composed of three or four members from each supervisorial district and is recognized by the County as having a key role advising on trails and other recreation matters. As CRAHTAC members live in most areas of the County, including the Santa Maria Valley/Orcutt area, Lompoc Valley, Santa Ynez Valley, and South Coast, we are well-positioned to understand local needs and sentiments regarding the provision of Open Space for Outdoor Recreation and related trail and recreational needs. Two of our members, Dan Gira and John Karamitsos, also have substantial experience in land conservation and the potential for conserved open space to accommodate multiple goals, including conservation of sensitive resources, open public recreation, and hazard avoidance.

CRAHTAC recommends that the County Open Space Element provide data, analysis, and policies that strongly support the provision of Open Space for Outdoor Recreation. We request that the Open Space Element thoroughly document the successes of open space protection since its adoption in 1979. We understand that tens of thousands of acres of the County have been protected as open space over the last five decades, largely for conservation. While we applaud this success, we are concerned that a relatively small percentage of these conserved lands permit open public access, and we believe that the Open Space Element should contain policies and clear actions to rebalance our approach to land conservation to permit more open public access to lands already conserved and ensure that open space protection efforts accommodate open public access wherever possible

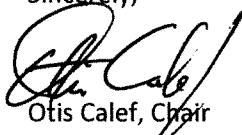
consistent with reasonable protection of sensitive resources. We typically do not support excluding public access to extensive conserved areas and believe that, with even targeted management actions, such as exclusion fencing and signs, resource protection and outdoor recreation are typically compatible uses.

We are particularly concerned that the County utilize the Open Space Element to pursue completion of its planned trail systems and other potential opportunities for high-quality Open Space for Outdoor recreation. For example, we recommend that the Open Space Element pursue completion of the California Coastal Trail on properties throughout the County, including Hollister Ranch and the Dangermond Preserve, as well as all properties along the eastern Gaviota Coast, such as Naples and Dos Pueblos Ranch, if such properties are acquired for open space protection purposes. We also recommend that the Open Space Element contain policies to ensure the completion of other planned and potential trails, such as those set forth in the County's Gaviota Coastal Plan. While we recognize that the County Recreation Master Plan and targeted amendments to the Land Use Element address many recreation issues, they do not provide a comprehensive assessment of the status of provision of Open Space for Outdoor Recreation and the need to address public access to past open space acquisitions and to ensure that future open space acquisitions accommodate high-priority outdoor recreation. We believe the Open Space Element needs to thoroughly address these issues.

In closing, CRAHTAC recommends that the Open Space Element strongly support the provision of Open Space for Outdoor Recreation and be consistent with the Recreation Master Plan and Land Use Element amendments. We believe that the Open Space Element should strive to rebalance the County's approach to open space protection, ensuring that the provision of Open Space for Outdoor Recreation is a high priority.

Thank you for considering this input and request.

Sincerely,



Otis Calef, Chair
CRAHTAC

cc: Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
Jeff Lindgren, Deputy Director, Santa Barbara County Parks Division
Lisa Plowman, Director, Santa Barbara County Planning and Development
Santa Barbara County Parks Commission
Santa Barbara County Planning Commission