

Katherine Douglas

Public Comment - Main

3

LATE
DIST

From: Sharyn Main <sharynmain@cox.net>
Sent: Monday, August 25, 2025 5:00 PM
To: sbcob
Subject: Comments for BOS - item 25-00751
Attachments: Open Space Element Scoping Hearing_8.26.25.pdf

Caution: This email originated from a source outside of the County of Santa Barbara. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.

Please find my comment letter regarding the Planning & Development/Open Space Element Scoping (25-00751)

Thank you,
Sharyn

Sharyn Main
Community Inspiration | Collaboration | Transformation
SharynMain@cox.net
(805) 698-8740

August 25, 2025

Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
Re: Planning & Development - Open Space Element Update

Chairwoman Capps and Members of the Board,

I respectfully submit the following comments for your consideration of the County's proposed updates to the Open Space Element (OSE) of the General Plan, as required by Senate Bill (SB)1425.

I am a member of Biodiversity Working Group, a coalition of nearly 50 organizations and individuals working together to elevate a vision for biodiversity in Santa Barbara County and align policies and actions to stop habitat loss and fragmentation. I also serve on the management team of the Wildfire Resilience Collaborative, which fosters collaboration to create a more climate-resilient and fire-adapted region.

Updating the Open Space Element is an exciting opportunity to create meaningful policies that guide open space protection and management in the county, and ensure wildlife and habitat connectivity, protection of floodplains and waterways, fire resilience landscapes, and equitable access to nature. The best way to accomplish these goals is through a comprehensive multi-element update approach with strong public engagement, coordination of planning efforts (underway and planned), and robust environmental analysis and review.

Recommendations:

1) Adopt staff recommendation Option 3 (high option)

- The Open Space Element is an important tool for guiding future development and direction of the county and should establish clear goals and policies for preservation and management of open space. Therefore, the OSE should have **enforceable policies** to guide and direct new development, annexation, rezoning, and government programs.
- The OSE and Conservation Element are two distinct but related parts of the General Plan. The Conservation Element, which is due to be updated by 2028, will need to consider wildlife connectivity as required by Assembly Bill (AB) 1889 Room to Roam Act, while the OSE will address 're-wilding' opportunities as per Senate Bill (SB) 1425. **Combining the OSE and Conservation Element**, as identified in Option 3, will ensure alignment of conservation goals and land use policies across multi-elements in the General Plan.

2) Prioritize a multi-element/high option approach as a 'high priority' project for funding in Planning & Development's annual work plan over the next 2 fiscal years

- If budget constraints in the current fiscal year do not allow for the comprehensive multi-element approach now, the low and moderate options (Options 1 and 2) proposed by staff should be **used as phases toward a comprehensive update process** over several

years. This will lay the groundwork for a comprehensive OSE and Conservation Element update and create more efficiency in the element update process.

- Ensure funding for a comprehensive phased approach through the County's annual work plan budgeting process, and augment County funding by directing staff to **seek grants and leverage other planning efforts** happening concurrently in the county. This will ensure there are resources needed for a robust multi-element approach.

3) Engage with other planning efforts and community partners

- LAFCO is currently awaiting grant funding on a Sustainable Ag & Land Conservation (SALC) planning effort (notification by end of the year), which has overlapping and complimentary goals in regards to resource protection, directing new development, and land uses. Resources and recommendations from that planning effort can inform the OSE and Conservation Element updates. **P&D staff should be encouraged to participate in the SALC planning project** if the grant is awarded to LAFCO.
- The Biodiversity Working Group could be called upon to help guide staff in the OSE and Conservation Element update process as advisors, brainstorming partners, and information sharing. Please **consider an advisory committee to help guide the planning process**.

The County's Open Space Element has the potential to guide growth and development in the region while also ensuring open space, wild areas and natural resources are protected and part of our future to benefit everyone. Please embrace this wonderful opportunity to create a true framework for the integration and alignment of this important element into all the General Plan elements.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sharyn Main".

Sharyn Main

Member of the Biodiversity Working Group

Partner/collaborator of the Wildfire Resilience Collaborative