

Policies and Implementation

a. Natural Resources Stewardship Policies

Policy NS-1: Watershed Planning. Planning efforts associated with long-term plans, programs, and projects shall be considered in light of the conditions of, and in context with, the local watershed. Where feasible, watershed health shall be enhanced through implementation of these planning efforts.

Policy NS-2: Natural Resources Protection. Environmentally Sensitive Habitat (ESH) areas and important or sensitive biological and natural resources shall be protected to the maximum extent feasible. Where special-status plant and animal species are found pursuant to the review of a discretionary project, the habitat in which the sensitive species is located shall be preserved to the maximum extent feasible. Within the Coastal Zone, Environmentally Sensitive Habitat (ESH) areas shall be protected against any significant disruption of habitat values, and only uses dependent on those resources shall be allowed within those areas. Development in areas adjacent to ESH areas and parks and recreation areas shall be sited and designed to prevent impacts which would significantly degrade those areas, and shall be compatible with the continuance of those habitat and recreation areas.

Policy NS-3: Natural Resources Enhancement. Support voluntary and incentive based efforts to restore and enhance Environmentally Sensitive Habitat (ESH) areas and important or sensitive biological and natural resources within the Gaviota Coast.

Policy NS-4: ESH Criteria and Habitat Types. The following criteria are used in determining which habitats in the Gaviota Coast Plan area warrant the Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area overlay designation:

- 1) Unique, rare, or fragile communities which should be preserved to ensure their survival in the future, e.g., dune vegetation, native grasslands.
- 2) Rare and endangered species habitats that are also protected by Federal and State laws, e.g., harbor seal rookeries and haul out areas.
- 3) Plant community ranges that are of significant scientific interest because of extensions of range, or unusual hybrid, disjunct, and relict species.
- 4) Sensitive wildlife habitats which are vital to species survival, e.g., White-tailed Kite habitat, butterfly trees.
- 5) Outstanding representative natural communities that have values ranging from a particularly rich flora and fauna to an unusual diversity of species.
- 6) Areas with outstanding educational values that should be protected for scientific research and educational uses now and in the future, e.g., Naples Reef.
- 7) Areas that are important because of their biological productivity such as wetlands, kelp beds, and intertidal areas.
- 8) Areas that are structurally important in protecting natural landforms and species, e.g., dunes which protect inland areas, riparian corridors that protect stream banks from erosion and provide shade, kelp beds which provide cover for many species.

Specific biological habitats are considered environmentally sensitive and shall be subject to the provisions of the Environmentally Sensitive Habitat (ESH) and Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Gaviota (ESH GAV) Overlays including qualifying habitat that exists outside of the mapped ESH and ESH GAV overlays. A general guideline for inclusion is those plant communities that have a California Natural

Diversity Database (CNDDDB) rarity ranking of G1, S1, G2, S2, G3, or S3. Two habitat types have been included due to their sensitive nature within the county, although they do not meet the rarity ranking criterion (i.e., Coast Live Oak Woodlands and Western rush marshes). Additional sensitive wildlife habitats are also listed. The list includes, but is not limited to:

- 1) Native Forests and Woodlands including, but not limited to: madrone forest, tanoak forest, black cottonwood forest, Bishop pine forest, California sycamore woodlands, coast live oak woodland, Valley oak, red willow thickets, and California bay forest;
- 2) **Rare Native Chaparral and Coastal Scrub Habitats, including, but not limited to: Burton Mesa shrubland chaparral, central maritime chaparral, wart leaf Ceanothus chaparral, giant Coreopsis scrub, bush monkeyflower scrub, California brittle bush scrub, sawtooth goldenbush scrub, silver dune lupine-mock heather scrub, lemonade berry scrub, and white sage scrub;**
- 3) Rare Native Grassland and Herbaceous vegetation, including, but not limited to: Dune mats, Western rush marshes, meadow barley patches, giant wildrye grassland, creeping ryegrass turfs, foothill needlegrass grasslands, purple needlegrass grasslands;
- 4) Coastal Wetlands, including, but not limited to: estuarine, riverine and riparian habitats;
- 5) Marine mammal haulouts;
- 6) Monarch butterfly habitat;
- 7) Raptor nesting and breeding areas; and
- 8) Special status species habitats.

A table giving the full names of the plant communities mentioned in items 1-3 above, along with rarity rankings per the California Natural Diversity Database 2010 List of Natural Plant Communities and the Wildlife Habitats Relationship community name, is included as Appendix B.

Policy NS-5: Wetlands. The County shall seek opportunities and create incentives for restoration of degraded wetlands.

Policy NS-6: Wildlife Corridors. Development shall avoid to the maximum extent feasible and otherwise minimize disruption of identified wildlife travel corridors.

Policy NS-7: Riparian Vegetation. Riparian vegetation shall be protected to the maximum extent feasible. Riparian vegetation shall not be removed except where clearing is necessary for the maintenance of existing roads and/or free flowing channel conditions, the removal of invasive exotic species, stream/creek restoration, or the provision of essential public services. Any unavoidable riparian vegetation removal conducted in compliance with the activities identified by this policy shall be conducted in compliance with the Environmentally Sensitive Habitat and resource protection policies and provisions of the Gaviota Coast Plan, the Comprehensive Plan, and the Local Coastal Program.

Policy NS-8: Invasive Species Habitat Removal. The County should continue to support efforts to assist landowners in removing invasive or noxious species. This could include evaluating available grant or other funding sources.