

# CONSERVATION

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## **2300 CONSERVATION**

### **INTRODUCTION**

- 2301 The unique natural setting of the Town of Woodside is the primary factor in the creation of the quality of life of the Town residents. The steep, tree covered slopes and deeply incised canyons of the Santa Cruz Mountains provide the watershed, land form and backdrop for the westerly portion of the Town. When viewed from scenic corridors in the urban valleys below, these western foothills provide the first impression of the community. The wooded slopes and stream corridors within the Town provide a spacious, natural and rural quality.
- 2302 The central portion of the Town contains the more gentle oak and grassland foothills, flatter valley areas, valley stream corridors containing riparian habitat, flood plains, ground water aquifers and seismic rift zones.
- 2303 The Town is endowed with a variety of landforms and environmental resources creating a mosaic of natural features and aesthetic qualities, that are unusual within an urban region. The preservation of these natural features represents the single most important community conservation value.
- 2304 The open lands surrounding Woodside also play important roles in conserving natural resources. The system of water, wildlife, geological and visual resources crosses political boundaries, and it should be maintained on a regional scale. Stanford lands, particularly the Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve, San Francisco Watershed lands and lands west of Skyline are composed of prominent natural features, such as streams, lakes, and wildlife habitat.
- 2305 In the past, natural resources often were not adequately managed, were unprotected and were taken for granted within the County and the region. Since its incorporation, the Town of Woodside has effected a careful stewardship of its resources through the utilization of land use policies and implementation programs which reflect strong conservation goals.
- 2306 The Conservation Element defines conservation goals and policies and provides a framework for the conservation and utilization of natural resources, and protection of the aesthetic qualities of the community. If the natural quality of the Woodside environment is to be maintained, citizens must be aware of both local and regional problems and issues faced by the Town. Some problems can be dealt with successfully locally, but many environmental concerns (e.g. air and water pollution) require interjurisdictional cooperation.

Some concerns, such as protection of rare or endangered species, may require cooperation of Town, public agencies and private agencies at the state or national levels.

2307 The conservation task, not only in Woodside but also throughout urban regions, requires human awareness, understanding and personal involvement, and not simply managing resources. It is imperative that there be a pervasive ecological consciousness, leading to a conservation ethic, if protection of the natural environment and improvement of the artificial environment are to be realized. To be effective, this ethic must be based on an appreciation of intangibles, a special feeling for the earth and the ecosystem, and a recognition of the value and roles of all living things.

2308 Woodside residents have repeatedly expressed their desire to maintain the Town's rural atmosphere and residential character. The conservation of natural resources is implied in this desire and has been reinforced through Town planning efforts and land use regulations. For these reasons, it is apparent that the foundation of a strong community conservation ethic exists. For the purposes of truly effective conservation, development and utilization of natural resources, however, there is a need for a more widespread understanding of how the ecosystem functions. This conservation element is intended to contribute to this understanding. It also establishes a programmatic framework for conservation actions.

2309 **GOAL**

G1 To preserve and protect the natural features and resources of the Town and Planning Area, which is essential to maintaining both the rural quality of life within the Town and the regional resource ecosystems of the region.

2310 **POLICIES**

P1 The natural features of a site proposed for development shall be one of the planning factors determining the scope and magnitude of development.

P2 All projects that may have significant impact on the Woodside environment shall be reviewed by qualified professionals. The results of such review should be analyzed and, where necessary, appropriate action taken to insure against irreversible damage.

P3 Particular attention shall be given to protection of the natural water regimen in the planning, environmental review, and completion of all subdivisions, land development or land alteration projects.

- P4** Conservation of the natural landscape shall be an overriding consideration in the design of any subdivision or land development project, paying particular attention to its protection and the preservation of existing native vegetation.
- P5** Removal of vegetation shall be minimized and where removal is necessary, replanting should be required to maintain soil stability, prevent erosion, maximize reoxygenation and retain the aesthetic qualities of the community.
- P6** In landscaping of individual sites and replanting where original vegetation has been destroyed or removed, the emphasis shall be on use of native rather than exotic plants. In areas of high fire risk, however, it may be preferable to introduce carefully chosen exotics with high fire resistance characteristics.
- P7** Topsoil destruction through overuse by motor vehicles or horses should be considered in environmental impact review and preventive measures should be required where necessary. In those areas where topsoil has been destroyed, remedial measures should be initiated and pursued.
- P8** Those areas rich in wildlife or of a fragile ecological nature (e.g. areas of rare or endangered species of plants, riparian areas, etc.) shall be avoided in land development. Where necessary, in order to preserve these areas, they should be publicly acquired to ensure protection.
- P9** An inventory of important natural resources, such as streams, bodies of water, wildlife habitat, vegetation and geological features, shall be created so that they may be more easily identified during project review and specific measures can be designed for their protection.
- P10** The use of pesticides shall be strictly limited to ensure protection of the environment. Special attention shall be given to local streams, ponds or other waterways.
- P11** The Town shall encourage and support the conservation of natural resources through recycling programs.
- P12** The Town shall institute regulations and educational and informational programs which aid the community in conserving natural resources.
- P13** Requirements for energy conservation in building construction shall be enforced by the Town.
- P14** The Town will participate in or support conservation efforts of other jurisdictions, agencies or organizations that are of mutual benefit.

P15 Conservation education programs shall be supported.

2311 **PROGRAM OBJECTIVES**

Woodside has adopted important regulations directed at attaining certain conservation objectives; however, to provide a comprehensive basis for conservation, development and utilization of natural resources, other actions are needed. Some actions, particularly regulation, can be taken by Woodside at the local level while others will require interjurisdictional cooperation (such as for air pollution control). In addition, many actions, e.g., remedial work programs, will depend upon both public and private efforts if conservation objectives are to be realized. (For a summary of action program components and implementation responsibilities see the matrix in Table 3.)

The actions described in subsequent paragraphs should be pursued in a coordinated manner to ensure maximum effectiveness in environmental protection.

01 **Ordinances**

Responsibility: Town

Regulations already adopted by the Town go a long way toward ensuring protection of the environment. Many sections of the Town's Zoning Ordinance (Required Conditions in All Districts, and Architectural and Site Plan Review) implement conservation goals. Regulations will be reviewed and additional policies and regulations will be developed as needed to conserve the resources of the Planning Area. However, to make Town regulatory efforts even more effective, the following actions should be pursued:

1. Ordinances — The need to coordinate the land use, subdivision and site development regulations presently included in a number of separate ordinances is recognized. These regulations have been codified so that attention will be directed to soils, geology, drainage, wildlife, vegetation, fire and other factors in all stages of project review. The goals are:
  - a. to ensure that a full range of environmental concerns be addressed before major decisions are made;
  - b. to establish more uniform procedures for administration of regulations;

- c. to provide applicants with a single unified source of information regarding Town requirements for conservation and development.
2. **Environmental Impact Review** — The Town reviews in depth the potential consequences of any development on the natural resources of the area. Proposed projects may be reviewed either through the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process or the Town's process. The California Environmental Quality Act requires environmental review of many projects, such as subdivisions and large residential additions. An initial study must be prepared and if significant environmental impacts are identified which cannot be mitigated, an environmental impact report must be prepared. Even if projects do not fall under CEQA's provisions, the Town's process requires environmental review of most projects. This review may occur when projects come before the Planning Commission and Town Council for public hearings and the Town staff for building permits.

When specific projects are proposed, the basic data maps on file in Town Hall should be studied to determine the general nature of probably consequences. Applicants shall be required to deal in their reports with questions raised from this initial review. Particular attention should be paid to the problems associated with the natural resource categories described earlier. When information is not sufficiently specific, applicant should be required to provide the detail information needed for evaluation.

02 **Education**

**Responsibility:** Town staff, Officials and Committees  
Woodside Branch Library  
Other Jurisdictions  
Public School Districts  
Private Organizations

Possibilities will be explored of additional public education and information programs dealing with problems associated with the natural resource conservation and utilization. This should be done by Town staff and elected and appointed officials, and appropriate committees, in cooperation with school officials at all levels. The expanded use of instructional materials based on local environmental conditions would be desirable in local elementary and high schools and the community college. Similar materials should also be available for adult education classes. Discussion should be initiated of an expanded conservation education program in cooperation with the local school districts and other jurisdictions. In addition, special seminars and

classes including public meetings, and information sessions with private clubs or groups should be sponsored.

When other public agencies or conservation groups are sponsoring information sessions on subjects of mutual concern, the Town should assist in publicizing events. This could be accomplished through direct communication with Town officials, notices posted on bulletin boards at Town Hall and the Woodside branch of the County library.

The library branch could also serve as a basic source of information on topical conservation problems. Information could be displayed focusing on seasonal or currently relevant topics, such as reduction of fire risk, pest control and pesticides, measures to prevent erosion, positive soil husbandry practices, and care of vegetation. In addition, special conservation or ecology projects conducted by local schools could be publicized or displayed as appropriate. Another consideration for dissemination of conservation information might be the placement of a kiosk at a popular point in the Town Center on which current material and notices could be posted.

Another method for public education could be the development of a community nature center or centers. Such centers could serve as the focus of community conservation efforts and possibly could be established in conjunction with the school districts. Criteria for location of such a center include easy access to geologic study areas that provide a diversity of species. The Serpentine Landscape Province (Area 6 on the Plan Diagram) is close to Canada College. Another desirable location would be one affording access to the Searsville Marsh and Jasper Ridge (Area 5), and Guernsey Field (Area 11). The possibility of coordination with the Sequoia Union High School District and Stanford University for use of these important biological study areas should be explored.

There is also the possibility that a nature center could be developed at Thornewood, the Midpeninsular Regional Open Space District property on La Honda Road. The possibility of the development of such a center should be explored with the District.

**TABLE 3**  
**CONSERVATION FRAMEWORK**  
**Actions for Resource Conservation**  
**Implementation Responsibility**

Conservation Action Program Components	<u>Responsibility for Program Implementation</u>						
	Town Staff	Council Commission and Committees	Public School Districts	Interjurisdictional Cooperation	Private Organizations	Residents	Property Owners
<u>Town Regulation</u>							
(1) Zoning Ordinance	X	X					
(2) Site Development	X	X					
(3) Subdivision Ordinance	X	X					
(4) Environmental Review	X	X					
<u>Education</u>							
• Public School Ecology Program	X	X	X				
• Special Public and Private Ecology Meetings	X	X	X		X		
• Conservation Kiosk	X	X					
• Community Nature Center	X	X	X	X	X		
<u>Acquisition of Critical Areas</u>							
• Fee	X	X		X	X	X	
• Easements	X	X		X		X	
• Donations/Dedications							
<u>Technical Advice</u>							
• Public Information Service	X						
<u>Incentives</u>							
• Financial Relief	X	X		X			X
<u>Specific Conservation Activities</u>							
• Program for Coordinated Actions (local)	X	X			X	X	X
• Monitoring Procedure	X	X					

03 Acquisition of Critical Areas

Responsibility: Interjurisdictional, Public and Private

When regulation alone will not adequately protect natural resources, consideration will be given to public acquisition. Where the benefit would accrue primarily to local residents and property owners, protection is a Town responsibility; where the benefit would accrue to a larger population, the Town will seek action by the appropriate jurisdictions.

04 Technical Advice

Responsibility: Town staff and appropriate committee liaison

The system for accumulation of relevant conservation information and sources of technical advice at Town Hall will be continued. Information will be made available to residents through Town Hall, the library and public schools. Such information will be available for education programs and for individual use in dealing with specific problems. This information will also help Town staff in environmental analysis. Where detailed information is not currently available, Town staff should coordinate efforts for acquiring and compiling needed information.

05 Incentives

Responsibility: Town staff and Officials  
Interjurisdictional Cooperation

The use of incentive programs that could result in the conservation of important natural resource areas should be explored actively. Incentives in the form of tax relief or some other form of financial rebate (e.g. conservation or open space easements, tax allowance for land gifts,) might be important in this regard. New forms of tax relief would require State and Federal legislation to enable flexibility at the local level. Specific consideration should be given to the impact on local property tax revenues with costs and benefits fully evaluated so that appropriate policy can be adopted by the Town.

06 Specific Conservation Activities

Responsibility: Town staff, Officials and Committees  
Private Organizations  
Individual Residents  
Property Owners

In some cases, conservation activities, to be effective, may require participation of all segments of the community. In most cases, however, individual initiative by local residents and property owners, will be sufficient to carry out specific efforts for protection of the environment. For example:

- recycling;
- replanting to prevent erosion;
- control or elimination of exotic weed species;
- proper use of appropriate pesticides;
- removal of dead vegetation to reduce fire hazard;
- replacement of highly flammable vegetation with less flammable materials;
- use of native plants in preference to exotics in replanting;
- treatment of diseased trees;
- protection of streamside vegetation

These and other activities may require Town review if they are proposed as part of specific projects for land use or development. In any case, such activities should be monitored to the extent possible, to make sure they are not counterproductive.

In cases where the problem involves an area larger than an individual ownership, cooperative or coordinated effort may be needed. In such cases the Town can play an important role. Some activities, such as removal of any long standing obstruction to natural drainage or restoration of streamsid es, have such great potential for adverse impact that review by Town officials prior to action would be desirable in all cases.

In addition to the specific conservation activities mentioned earlier, a procedure should be developed for monitoring, to the extent possible, known or potential environmental problems to ensure that irreversible damage will not occur. Examples include stream siltation or pollution, soil erosion, danger associated with fire hazard areas, the destruction of soil by human activities, and from land instability, particularly landslides, etc. Town staff, in cooperation with informed and concerned citizens, however, should be able to establish a basic procedure for tracking the existing or potential problems of greatest concern.

## **NATURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY**

2312 The program objectives for conservation are related to the elements of the Woodside environment, their fragile characteristics, their interrelationships, and to actions for environmental protection. The natural resources detailed in Section 65203(d) of the Government Code are grouped into five basic resource categories:

- a. Watershed
- b. Water — surface creeks, ponds and groundwater
- c. Vegetation — native and exotic
- d. Soils and geology
- e. Wildlife
- f. Air

2313 Although the natural resource categories are described separately below, they are viewed as part of the interrelated system as much as possible.

### **Watershed**

2314 The vegetation in the undeveloped areas in the hillsides prevents soil erosion and protects water quality. Retention of this vegetation is necessary to ensure protection. Watershed lands are important for the propagation of native vegetation and wildlife, and for the scenic backdrop of the region.

### **Water: Streams, Bodies of Water and Groundwater**

2315 The conservation of the natural drainage system in the Woodside Planning Area is certainly one of the most important tasks before the Town. The tributary system of San Francisquito Creek drains much of the area; Redwood Creek drains most of the remainder. The major streams in Woodside that are part of this system and are of regional significance are: Alambique, Bear Gulch, Dry Creek, and West Union. There are other streams in Woodside of local significance, which are tributaries of the major creeks, and are defined in the Zoning Ordinance as natural creeks which drain an area of 30 acres or more. Control of the upstream portions of this drainage system is important to both Woodside and the downstream communities of the Midpeninsula. Appropriate land use and control of development is essential to prevent widespread damage in the lower reaches of the streams through siltation (from upstream erosion), flooding, and loss of flow in the stream in the dry seasons.

2316 Any alterations to the drainage system that would significantly change the natural flow of water would also affect wildlife species that are dependent on the riparian community for survival. It is, therefore, imperative that lands be protected to ensure the maintenance of the natural water flow and water quality essential for protection of the riparian community.

- 2317 Another element of the natural water system found in the Planning Area is the freshwater marsh near Searsville Lake. An extremely diverse population of birds, insects, and amphibians is supported by the marsh, and other animals rely upon it as a source of food. Water and green plant material are found in the marsh during the summer season. The marsh is maintained by water flow from San Francisquito Creek tributaries fed, to a large extent, by lands in Woodside. Therefore, the maintenance of the natural drainage system is also important for protection of the marsh.

Some individual septic systems are not operating effectively. Because of concern about water quality, steps should be taken to assure that these individual systems do not degrade groundwater quality.

#### Vegetation — Native and Exotic

- 2318 Vegetative cover contributes to the beauty of the area, aids in erosion control and is an important element of the wildlife habitat. It helps maintain air quality through reoxygenation and reduces noise impact.
- 2319 Broadleaf-Conifer forests (including oaks, madrones, redwoods and douglas firs) and chaparral form the predominant vegetative communities on the hillsides leading up to Skyline. These wooded areas also support a wide variety of animal life, although they are not as productive or diverse as the wetlands.
- 2320 Other vegetative types within the Planning Area are mixed oak woodlands, chaparral, and grassland-savanna areas. Generally, the oak woodlands tend to support a higher diversity of organisms than do grasslands. The chaparral areas represent a particularly high fire hazard during the dry seasons of the year. The grasslands contain largely exotic species and are thus less suited to the needs of native animals. Some open grassland areas on the hillsides, however, do increase diversity of habitat types. Serpentine landscape areas which support special plant communities, including some species considered rare within the region also occur, principally along the I-280 freeway corridor.

#### Soils and Geology

- 2321 Development often has occurred without adequate evaluation of soils and geologic characteristics. Some resource problems have resulted from construction on active landslides and from establishment of septic tank drainfields in nonpermeable soils. In addition, excessive vegetative removal by grading during construction has created soil erosion problems, as has overgrazing and overuse of certain areas by equestrians.

### Wildlife

- 2322 The greater portion of the Woodside area is relatively undisturbed and serves as the habitat of a diverse wildlife population. Conservation of this habitat is not only important for protection of wildlife, but also for conservation of the rural atmosphere of Woodside. Development has occurred in parts of the Planning Area with little concern for conservation of wildlife habitats, with the result that natural species are sometimes driven out. Other species are introduced into the ecosystem that may have drastic effects upon both the native animal and plant populations of a given area (e.g., there is a significant amount of space in Woodside devoted to the maintenance of horses, goats and dogs).

### Air

- 2323 Clean air is a resource people require for survival not only directly through breathing, but also for the maintenance of their food sources, both plant and animal. The problem of air pollution continues to be a major environmental concern. Air pollution is associated with major respiratory diseases and with extensive economic losses has been widely documented. Although Woodside alone can contribute only a little amount toward improving air quality, it can influence regional, State, and Federal actions needed for abatement of air pollution.