



PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT

LONG RANGE PLANNING DIVISION

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TO: Planning Commission

Agenda of: December 11, 2025

FROM: Tim Pitt, Senior Planner

DATE: November 18, 2025

RE: Conservation and Open Space Element Update – SB 1425

Introduction:

The Conservation Element and the Open Space Element are two of the seven mandatory elements that must be included in a General Plan. The El Dorado County (County) 2004 General Plan combined these two elements into one single element creating a more comprehensive and integrated framework for the protection of the County's natural resources. The purpose of the Conservation and Open Space Element is to address the management, preservation, and conservation of natural resources and open space in County, ensuring the availability of those resources to future generations. The Conservation and Open Space Element should work in coordination with the Land Use Element to guide conservation and development balancing community needs with environmental preservation.

The General Plan is the foundation development policy document of the County. It defines the framework by which the physical, economic, human resources, and natural resources of the County are to be managed and used over time. The General Plan acts to clarify and articulate the intentions of the County with respect to the rights and expectations of the public and property owners. The General Plan informs these citizens of the goals, objectives, policies, and standards for the conservation and improvement of the County's existing natural resources and open space, and the preservation of significant biological, historical, and cultural resources.

Staff Recommendations:

Staff recommends the Planning Commission forward a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors to take the following actions:

1. Adopt the Addendum to County's General Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR), certified in May 2003 (State Clearinghouse Number 2001082030) demonstrating that

the analysis in that EIR adequately addresses the potential physical impacts associated with the implementation of the Conservation and Open Space Element and this update would not trigger any of the conditions described in California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15162 calling for the preparation of a subsequent EIR or negative declaration based on the analysis prepared; and

2. Approve General Plan Amendment GPA25-0003 amending the General Plan to incorporate amendments to the Conservation and Open Space Element based on Findings in Exhibit D.

Project Background:

In 2022, the California Legislature passed Senate Bill 1425 (SB 1425) which requires every local jurisdiction to review and update its Conservation and Open Space Element to include the following: 1) access to open space for all residents in a manner that considers social, economic, and racial equity; 2) climate resilience and other benefits of open space, correlated with the safety element; and 3) rewilding opportunities, correlated with the land use element.

Staff, using guidance from the Governor’s Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation, formerly the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research, drafted targeted amendments to the existing Conservation and Open Space Element with the goal of complying with the State’s SB 1425 directive while still maintaining reasonable and achievable goals and policies for County. A draft with deletions and additions struck out and underlined (Exhibit B) and a clean draft (Exhibit C) are included as attachments to this Staff Memo.

The Conservation and Open Space Element was adopted as a component of the General Plan in July 2004 and amended once in October 2017 as a part of the General Plan Biological Resources Policy Update Project.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA):

The Addendum to County’s General Plan EIR, certified in May 2003 (State Clearinghouse Number 2001082030), Exhibit A, demonstrates that the analysis in that EIR adequately addresses the potential physical impacts associated with implementation of the proposed project and the proposed project would not trigger any of the conditions described in CEQA Guidelines Section 15162 calling for the preparation of a subsequent EIR or negative declaration.

As a policy document, the amendments to the Conservation and Open Space Element do not result in physical changes to the environment, but identify policies to address the management, preservation, and conservation of natural resources, cultural resources, and open space in County. None of the policies in the proposed Conservation and Open Space Element would change existing land use patterns, as established by the General Plan, and evaluated in the General Plan EIR. All future projects that are a result of the Conservation and Open Space Element must comply with the General Plan and any applicable laws. In addition, future discretionary actions require independent and project-specific environmental review to comply with CEQA.

Exhibits:

- A. CEQA – Addendum to County’s General Plan EIR, certified in May 2003 (State Clearinghouse Number 2001082030)
- B. Conservation and Open Space Element Update – Strikeout/Underline
- C. Conservation and Open Space Element Update – Clean
- D. Findings
- E. Summary of Revisions