

# Lime Rock Valley Specific Plan

Agricultural Commission

October 8, 2025

# General Plan Policy 8.1.2.2

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Some lands within Rural Regions have **historically** been used for **commercial grazing** of livestock **and** are **currently capable of sustaining commercial grazing** of livestock. If they can be demonstrated to be suitable land for grazing, and if they were not assigned urban or other nonagricultural uses in the Land Use Map for the 1996 General Plan, those lands shall be protected with a minimum of 40 acres unless such lands already have smaller parcels or the Board of Supervisors determines that economic, social, or other considerations justify the creation of smaller parcels for development or other nonagricultural uses. Where 40-acre minimum parcel sizes are maintained, planned developments may be considered which are consistent with the underlying land use designation. Before taking any actions to create parcels of less than 40 acres in areas subject to this policy, the Board of Supervisors and/or Planning Commission shall solicit and consider input from the Agricultural Commission.

# Agricultural Commission Input

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- Input must be based on evidence.
  - Presented substantial evidence and requesting your consideration.
- Policy 8.1.2.2 weighs against subdivision only if it “demonstrated” that the site is suitable for commercial grazing.
- Input against subdivision can be provided consistent with Policy 8.1.2.2 only if Commission determines based on consideration of all of the evidence that:
  - The FMMP Grazing Land has been historically used for commercial grazing of livestock; **and**
  - The FMMP Grazing Land is currently capable of sustaining commercial grazing of livestock.

# Comprehensive Analysis

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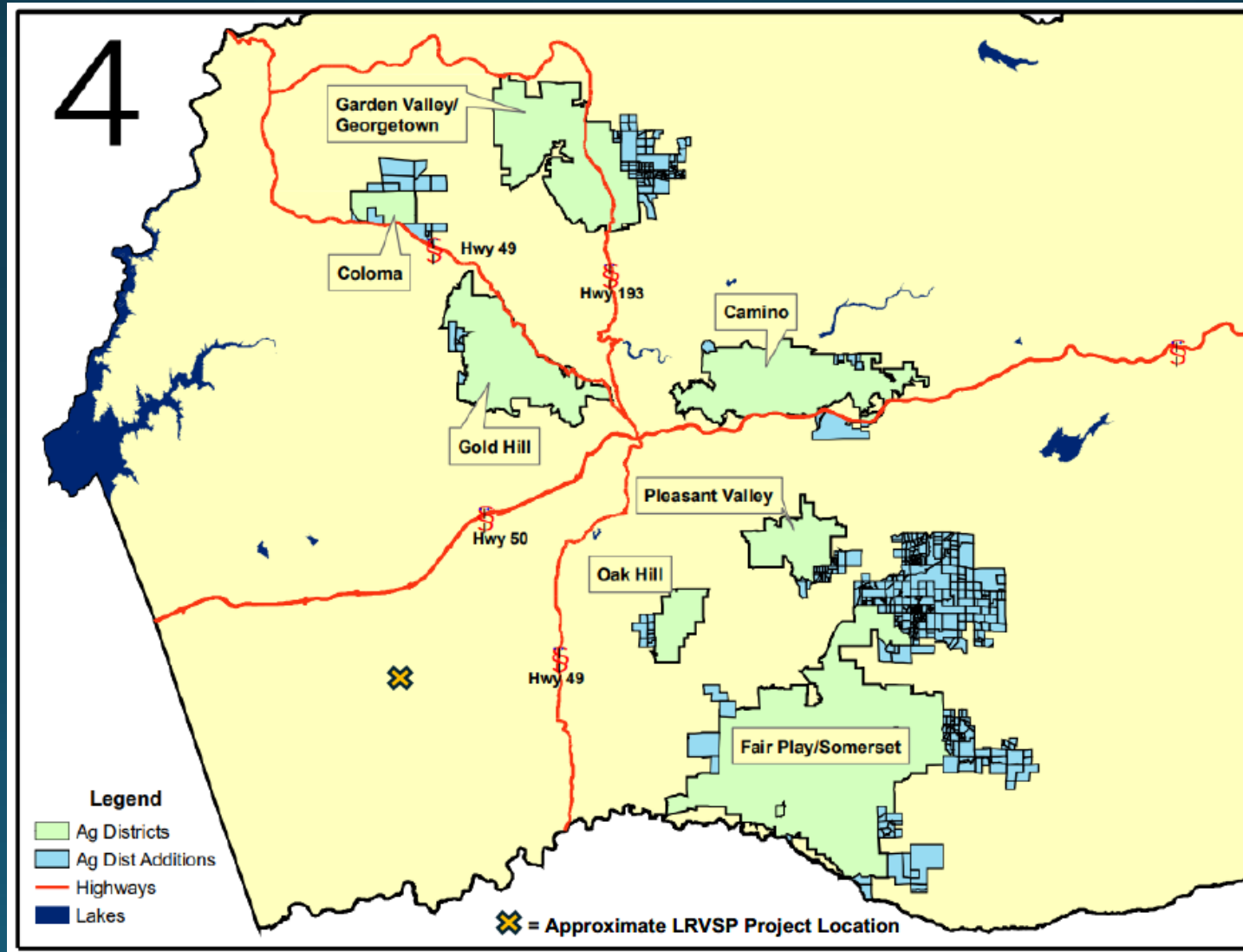
- Evidence before Commission demonstrates that land may be subdivided consistent with Policy 8.1.2.2 because:
  - There was no historic commercial grazing
  - *Grazing Viability Assessment* by Koopmann Rangeland Consulting concludes a commercial grazing operation cannot be sustained
  - Carrying capacity does not meet Williamson Act threshold of one animal unit per acre
  - Land does not have “good agricultural capability” under County’s adopted *Procedure for Evaluating the Suitability of Land for Agriculture*
  - Land does not have significant agricultural land when scored under state’s *Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model* (“LESA”)

# Important Agricultural Land in County

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- Objective 8.1.1 prioritizes identification of agricultural lands and provides for “[i]dentification of agricultural lands within the County that are important to the local agricultural economy including important crop lands and grazing lands.”
- If land is identified as “important agricultural lands,” Policy 8.1.1.1 provides for the establishment of Agricultural Districts for the “purposes of conserving, protecting, and encouraging the agricultural use of important agricultural lands and associated activities throughout the County . . . .”
- Policy 8.1.1.4 provides: “The procedures set forth in *The Procedure for Evaluating the Suitability of Land for Agriculture* **shall be used for evaluating the suitability of agricultural lands in Agricultural Districts** and Williamson Act Contract lands (agricultural preserves).”

# Site is Far from Agricultural Districts



# Historic Use

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- Primary historic use of project site was a limestone mine.
  - Approximately 40 head of cattle were intermittently grazed for limited and inconsistent durations as feed allowed about 20 years ago.
  - Approximately 12 head of cattle were grazed for partial years on the Project site intermittently over the last 10 years.
- Intermittent grazing with limited cattle did not produce income and was not a commercial grazing operation.
- Mutually beneficial relationship between landowner and cattleman in that (1) landowner obtained the benefit of some brush clearing and vegetation management for fire/fuel management; and (2) cattleman obtained open space land at no cost and marginal feed for limited durations of the year.

# Grazing Viability Assessment

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- Clayton Koopmann, Koopmann Rangeland Consulting
- Grazing Viability Assessment (March 10, 2025)
  - Methodology used
  - Evaluation included assessment of Soil Survey and assessment of vegetation through site inspection



# Commercial Grazing



## 4.1 DEFINITION OF “COMMERCIAL GRAZING”

The County of El Dorado has not formally adopted a definition for “commercial grazing”. Based on my professional experience, use of the term “commercial”, defined as “for profit”, dictates that the term “commercial grazing” can be defined as:

*“The practice of raising livestock on land, either seasonally or year-round, for a profit.”*

The definition of “commercial grazing” can be further expanded to include:

*“The practice of raising livestock on land for a profit, either seasonally or year-round, with the sale of livestock being the primary source of income for the livestock producer.”*

# Limited Carrying Capacity



- Calculated available dry-weight forage based on Soil Survey for favorable, normal, and unfavorable production years.
- Poor-quality soil produces low yield forage that is further impacted by heavy presence of woody vegetation and brush.
- Seasonal fall/winter grazing (October-April) likely due to moderately poor forage.
- For year-round grazing, substantial supplemental forage (hay) and mineral/protein required.

- **Favorable Production Year:**  
109.2 AUMs = 18.2 cows grazing for 6-months.
- **Average Production Year:**  
86.4 AUMs = 14.4 cows grazing for 6 months.
- **Unfavorable Production Year:**  
61.2 AUMs = 10.2 cows grazing for 6 months.

# Infrastructure Required

- For sustainable commercial grazing, substantial infrastructure improvements required, including fencing, water source and infrastructure, and corrals.

**Table-5:** Grazing Infrastructure Improvement Budget – Lime Rock Valley FMMP lands.

INFRASTRUCTURE	UNIT MEASURE	QUANTITY	PRICE/UNIT	TOTAL PRICE
<b><u>WATER SYSTEM</u></b>				
Waterline (installed)	Linear feet (lf)	2,500	\$3.50/lf.	\$8,750.00
Prefab Concrete Water Trough (plumbed/installed)	Each	3	\$3,500.00/ea.	\$10,500.00
5,000-gallon poly water tank	Each	1	\$2,500.00/ea.	\$2,500.00
Drill new well for water source	Each	1	\$45,000.00	\$45,000.00
Solar Powered Water Pump (Grundfos brand)	Each	1	\$12,500.00/ea.	\$12,500.00
		<b>TOTAL:</b>		<b>\$79,250.00</b>
<b><u>LIVESTOCK FENCING</u></b>				
5-strand barbed wire fencing	Linear feet (lf)	26,154	\$9.50/lf.	\$248,463.00
		<b>TOTAL:</b>		<b>\$248,463.00</b>
<b><u>LIVESTOCK CORRAL</u></b>				
Steel pipe/panel corral	Each	1	\$45,500.00/ea.	\$45,500.00
Powder River Manual Squeeze Chute	Each	1	\$7,500.00/ea.	\$7,500.00
Powder River Lead-up/Alley	Each	1	\$4,750.00/ea.	\$4,750.00
		<b>TOTAL:</b>		<b>\$57,750.00</b>
Sub-Total:				\$385,463.00
Add 15% Contingency:				\$57,819.45
<b>GRAND TOTAL:</b>				<b>\$443,282.45</b>

# Operating at a Loss



- Operating budget prepared assuming ownership of cattle and infrastructure completed.
- Budget demonstrates operation at a loss even without accounting for depreciation of livestock or interest on an operating line of credit.
- Detailed at page 15 with conclusions of:
  - Annual Revenue: \$27,715
  - Annual Operational Costs: \$32,359
  - Annual Loss: \$(4,644)
- Annual loss of -\$331.71 per cow, which could not sustain grazing operation.

# Goats and Sheep



- Goats or sheep grazing are not commercially viable:
  - Grazing of goats for wildfire mitigation would cost landowner approximately \$1,500-\$3,500 per acre.
  - Sheep are less commercially viable than cows due to poor lamb prices.

# Conclusions

- There is no infrastructure in place to support livestock grazing on the FMMP lands.
- The estimated cost to install necessary grazing infrastructure is exceptionally high in comparison to the limited capacity for grazing on the FMMP lands (Table-5).
- The poor-quality soil found on the FMMP lands produces a low yield of forage for grazing livestock. Forage production is further impacted by the heavy presence of woody vegetation and brush. Limited forage production yields a low carrying capacity for grazing.
- Based on the estimated carrying capacity/seasonal grazing use, a commercial grazing operation is not economically viable or sustainable on the FMMP lands (Table-6), even if irrigated pasture is incorporated into the grazing rotation for 6-months out of the year.

# Agricultural Impact Analysis

- CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act)
- Agricultural Impacts analyzed using:
  - The LESA Model for CEQA
  - The El Dorado County Model under General Plan policies



# LESA Model

- “LE” Land Evaluation (Soils Type)
- “SA” Site Assessment (Size, Location, Water Availability)
- The California Model was developed in the early 90’s by the Department of Conservation
- Based on the original LESA Model developed in 1981 by Soil Conservation Service



# El Dorado County Model

- Developed in partnership with:
  - El Dorado County Agricultural Commission
  - Soil Conservation Service
  - El Dorado County Planning
- Considers:
  - Soil
  - Climate
  - Water
  - Land Use
  - Parcel Size

# LESA Analysis of Grazing Land

- Factors are Weighted and Points Assigned
- Score Between 0-39: Not Considered Significant
- LRV Grazing Land Score: **29.73**
- Result: Impact on Agricultural Resource is Not Significant

## County Model Analysis

- Good Agricultural Capability Score  $\geq 60$
- LRV Grazing Land Score: **32**
- Result: LRV Grazing Land has Poor Agricultural Capability

# Agricultural Commission Input

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