

**COUNTY OF EL DORADO DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
PLANNING COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT**



Agenda of: June 26, 2014
Staff: Aaron Mount

SPECIAL USE PERMIT

FILE NUMBER: S13-0010/Salmon Falls Ranch Trail and Trailhead Facility

APPLICANT: American River Conservancy

REQUEST: Special Use Permit request for a parking area, trailhead facility, and a trail system.

LOCATION: East side of Salmon Falls Road, approximately one-fourth mile north of the Salmon Falls Bridge in the Pilot Hill area, Supervisorial District 4. (Exhibit A)

APNs: 104-060-48 & -07 (Exhibit B)

ACREAGE: 196.36 acres

GENERAL PLAN: Agricultural Lands/Rural Residential (AL/RR) (Exhibit C)

ZONING: Exclusive Agricultural (AE)(Exhibit D)

ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT: Negative Declaration

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends the Planning Commission take the following actions:

1. Adopt the Negative Declaration based on the Initial Study prepared by staff; and
2. Approve Special Use Permit S13-0010 based on the Findings and subject to the Conditions of Approval.

STAFF ANALYSIS

Project Description: The application is a Special Use Permit request for a parking area, trailhead facility, and non-motorized trail system. The parking area would contain 30 parking spaces including 20 standard parking spaces and 10 trailer parking spaces and would be connected to Salmon Falls Road by a driveway. The parking area would be available to the public year round from dawn to dusk with evening parking allowed with advance permission only from the property owner. The trailhead at the eastern end of the parking lot would contain a kiosk with trail maps, safety guidelines, and emergency contact information, recreation information, and natural resource interpretation. The trail would consist of 5,280 linear feet of natural surface non-motorized trail connecting the parking lot to the existing South Fork American River Trail. The parking area and connection trail would provide equestrian parking and access to the South Fork American River Trail that is not currently available at adjacent facilities on Federal lands.

Site Description: The project site ranges in elevation from 650 feet to 950 feet and consists of 196.36 acres. The unimproved site is mostly oak woodland, chaparral, and annual grassland. Riparian habitat comprises approximately 5 percent of the property due to Acorn Creek and Peacock Ravine, both seasonal streams, flowing through portions of the property. The site is accessed directly off of Salmon Falls Road and is adjacent to the Folsom Reservoir.

Adjacent Land Uses:

	Zoning	General Plan	Land Use/Improvements
Site	AE	AL/RR	Agricultural/Undeveloped
North	AE/RA-20/RE-10	AL/RR	Agricultural/residential, Vacant/single family residence
South	RF	OS	Reservoir/Bureau of Reclamation, Folsom Reservoir
East	RF	OS	Reservoir/Bureau of Reclamation, Folsom Reservoir
West	AE	RR	Agricultural/Undeveloped

STAFF ANALYSIS

The parcel is zoned AE. County Code Section 17.36.080.B permits uses compatible with the intent of the Land Conservation Act of 1965 in the AE Zone Districts with an approved Special Use Permit. Passive recreation is a use that is compatible with the historical agricultural use of the project site which was grazing and the Land Conservation Act of 1965. The applicant has provided a project narrative explaining the project details, potential benefits to the community, and site selection which is provided in attached Exhibit E.

Project Issues: The primary issues with this project are access, land use compatibility, oak canopy, noise, and recreation.

Access: The encroachment from the proposed onsite driveway to Salmon Falls Road was reviewed by the Transportation Division and preliminary plans were submitted by the applicant to ensure that the required sight distance and lane widths on Salmon Falls Road were achievable for ingress/egress to the project site. In addition to the standard encroachment requirement, the applicants would be required to remove select oak trees to ensure line of sight distances along Salmon Falls Road and to construct a 10 foot shoulder west of the encroachment in order to allow the passing of vehicles turning into the site. These requirements would ensure that the encroachment meets all County standards ensuring safe ingress/egress of vehicles.

Policy 6.2.3.2 directs the applicant to demonstrate that adequate access exists, or can be provided for emergency vehicles and private vehicles to access and evacuate the area. The plans were reviewed by the El Dorado County Fire Protection District for emergency ingress/egress capabilities. The Fire District stated that the on-site access driveway width and surfacing were adequate and they recommend standard conditions to ensure development to these standards. Therefore, the project would be in compliance with the General Plan Policy.

Land Use Compatibility: The site is surrounded by agricultural and residential uses. Policy 2.2.5.21 directs that development projects be located and designed in a manner that avoids incompatibility with adjoining land uses. The passive recreation facility would be over a thousand feet away from the closest residence with a significant grade change between the two uses. The project would be compatible and consistent with the rural residential land use designation and adjacent agricultural and residential uses because it has been designed to minimize the visual and noise effects on adjacent properties. As proposed and conditioned the trailhead and trail would be consistent with this policy.

Oak Canopy: Site development of the parking area and line of sight improvements along Salmon Falls Road would require the removal of eleven oak trees. Policy 7.4.4.4 establishes the native oak tree canopy retention and replacement standards. The applicant has submitted an oak tree survey dated March 18, 2014. The tree plan determined the mapped project site has an existing oak canopy of 58 percent and is required to retain 80 percent in accordance with the standards under Option A. The project proposes to remove 0.53 percent (0.47 acres) of the existing oak canopy and would retain over 80 percent. The proposed replanting area would be adjacent to the proposed parking lot and would have an effect of increasing the visual shielding of the parking lot from Salmon Falls Road. The Tree Plan demonstrates consistency with the standards under Option A of General Plan Policy 7.4.4.4 and the Interim Interpretive Guidelines of this policy is included as Attachment 4 of the Proposed Negative Declaration and Initial Study.

Noise Impacts: The project includes a parking area and trail for hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians. The South Fork American River Trail system is a non-motorized trail system for passive recreational uses only. Policy 6.5.1.7 states that noise created by new proposed non-transportation noise sources shall be mitigated so as not to exceed the noise level standards of Table 6-2 for noise-sensitive uses. In rural areas the exterior noise level standard is applied at a point 100 feet away from the nearest residence. The proposed passive recreational uses would be over 1,000 feet away from the closest residence with a significant grade change between the two

uses. The proposed uses including parking of vehicles and passive recreational uses are not anticipated to be a significant noise generator and would be in conformance with General Plan policies. Other trailheads in the County have been used as staging for recreation events such as trail running races and organized equestrian rides. These uses are consistent with the requested trail facility however, the project has a proposed condition that no amplified voice or music be used at the site without first submitting an acoustical analysis showing conformance with applicable General Plan policies. As proposed and conditioned the project would be consistent with Policy 6.5.1.7.

Recreation: While the South Fork American River Trail is not specifically detailed in the Hiking and Equestrian Trails Master Plan for El Dorado County, it is mentioned in the context that the proposed “Pilot Hill Trail (C-7) from Salmon Falls to Lotus would provide alternative access to the Folsom Lake State park in absence of possible use of the South Fork of the American River”. The American River Conservancy was able to link the trail corridor by obtaining parcels from willing sellers that bridged the gaps between publically owned parcels.

The project is consistent with General Plan Policies 9.1.2.8, 9.1.3.1, 9.1.3.2, 9.1.3.3, and Objectives 9.3.1, 9.3.2, and 9.3.3 in that the proposed project is a trailhead and trail system that is an asset to the community and County by protecting and maintaining existing recreational based assets, protecting and preserving those resources that attract tourism, and linking trails for public use that provide access to recreational resources. This project specifically provides public access to the South Fork of the American River increasing public access to scenic waterways.

Conclusion: The project has been reviewed in accordance with the General Plan policies, and it is consistent with the General Plan. Findings of consistency with the General Plan are provided in Attachment 2.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Staff has prepared an Initial Study (Exhibit L) to determine if the project has a significant effect on the environment. Potentially significant effects of the project on the environment have been mitigated by recommended conditions that avoid or lessen the impacts to a point of insignificance; therefore a Negative Declaration has been prepared and a Notice of Determination (NOD) will be filed. A \$50.00 filing fee for the NOD is required and the NOD must be filed within five working days from the project approval.

The filing of the NOD begins the statute of limitations time period for when litigation may be filed against the County’s action on the project. If the NOD is filed the statute of limitations ends 30 days from its filing. If no NOD is filed, it ends 180 days from the date of final action by the County.

In accordance with California Fish and Game Code Section 711.4, the project is subject to a fee of \$2,181.25 after approval, but prior to the County filing the Notice of Determination on the project. This fee plus the \$50.00 filing fee, is to be submitted to Planning Services and must be made payable to El Dorado County. The \$2,181.25 is forwarded to the State Department of Fish

and Wildlife and is used to help defray the cost of managing and protecting the State's fish and wildlife resources.

SUPPORT INFORMATION

Attachments to Staff Report:

Conditions of Approval
Findings

Exhibit A.....Location Map
Exhibit B.....Assessor's Parcel Map
Exhibit C.....General Plan Land Use
Exhibit D.....Zone District Map
Exhibit E.....Applicant-submitted Project Description
Exhibit F.....Site Plan
Exhibit G.....Site Plan Detail
Exhibits H1-6.....Grading Plan
Exhibits I1-2.....Site Photos
Exhibit J.....Preliminary Landscape Plan
Exhibit K.....South Fork American River Trail System
Exhibit L.....Proposed Negative Declaration and Initial Study