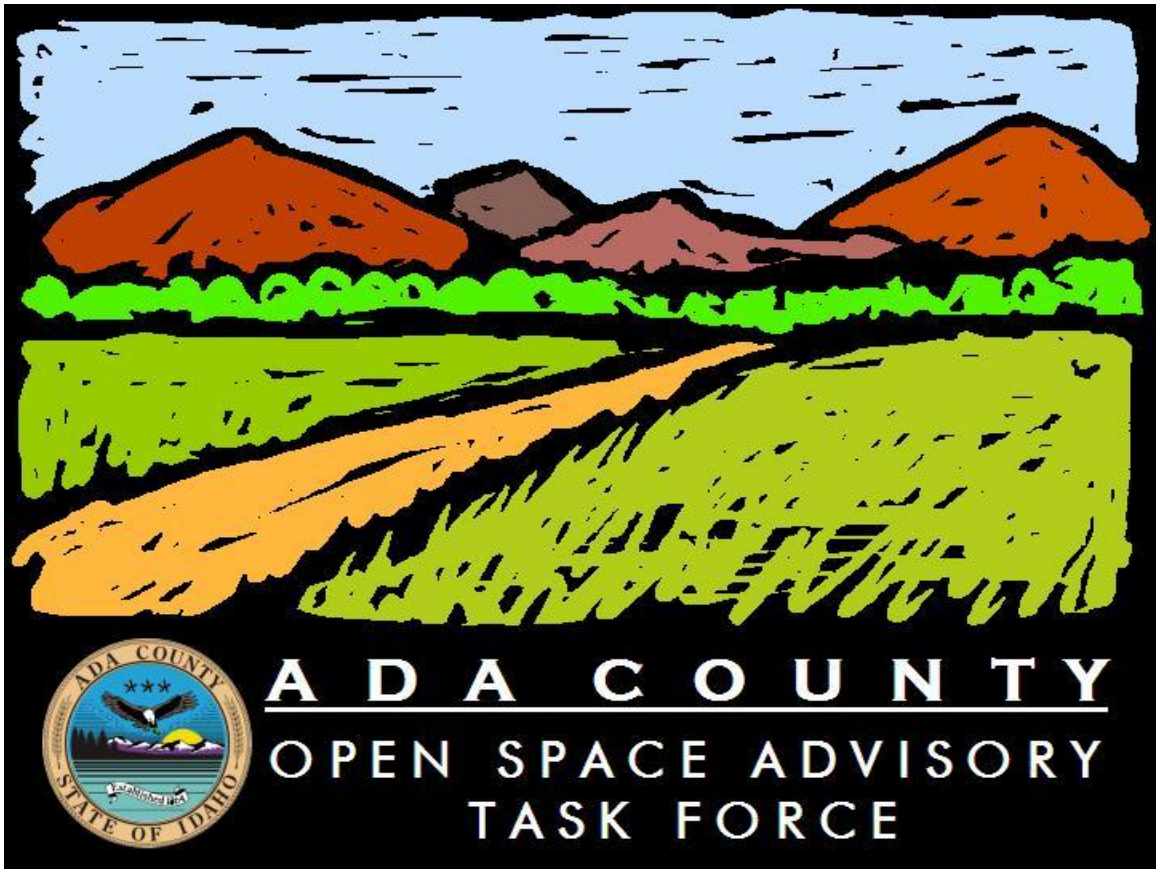
Findings and Recommendations



Presented to:

Board of Ada County Commissioners

April 22, 2008

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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List of Abbreviations

ACHD	Ada County Highway District
ACEC	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
AF	Acquisition/Funding
AOI	Area of Impact
ATV	All Terrain Vehicles
BGG	Blueprint for Good Growth
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BPCA	Barber Pool Conservation Area
COE	Army Corps of Engineers
FY	Fiscal Year
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
NCA	National Conservation Area
IDFG	Idaho Department of Fish and Game
IDL	Idaho Department of Lands
IDPR	Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation
IM	Incentive/Voluntary Mechanisms
LTTV	Land Trust of the Treasure Valley
PDRs	Purchase of Development Rights
PILT	Payment in Lieu of Taxes
PL	Public Lands
RC&D	Southwest Idaho Resource Conservation and Development
RM	Regulatory Mechanisms
RPP	Recreation and Public Purposes Act
SWCD	Ada County Soil and Water Conservation District
TDRs	Transfer of Development Rights
USBR	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
USFS	U.S. Forest Service

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Ada County Board of Commissioners formed the Open Space Advisory Task Force (Task Force) through Resolution 1459 on March 29th, 2007. The Board charged the Task force with:

- Creating conservation priorities in northwest, northeast , southwest, and southeast Ada County;
- Identifying priorities for public open space acquisition (at a conceptual level, not targeting specific private properties);
- Providing detailed recommendations for funding or incentives to create and maintain the public open space priorities; and
- Evaluating existing public lands and, if considered desirable and feasible, make recommendations for exchange or consolidation of these public lands

The Task Force Findings and Recommendations report describes the process and scope of the work effort, and identifies the criteria and values we seek in open space, provides maps of desired locations, land types and connections, describes the various tools available for conserving open space, and recommends actions for jurisdictions to accomplish the desired conservation of open space.

Concept and Framework For A County-Wide Conservation, Open Space & Recreation System

Imagine….large inter-connected natural lands throughout the **Foothills**, connecting people with the outdoors, protecting the scenic backdrop to the Valley and providing wildlife the habitat they need.

Imagine….a ribbon of wild lands, wetlands, parks and farmland along the **Boise River**, with a continuous pathway connecting communities together while providing access to the river for fishing, floating and family fun.

Imagine…Hubbard, Blacks Creek, Indian Creek, Lucky Peak and Swan Falls **Reservoirs as jewels** in the desert **connected by creeks, waterways and pathways**.

Imagine…the **Snake River and the Birds of Prey National Conservation Area** continuing to provide healthy raptor habitat and recreation opportunities.

Imagine…connecting people to natural open spaces with **pathways, corridors and bike lanes**, creating a county-wide network of parks, natural areas and waterways close to home.

The Task Force has focused on making these visions a reality through a concept and framework for a county-wide conservation, open space and recreation system. This concept and framework combines past public input and existing community plans with mapping and analysis of existing natural resource and land use conditions.

Mapping of Conservation and Open Space Preservation Priorities—Task Force Recommendations (page 21):

A central recommendation emerging from the Task Force effort is preparation and adoption of a county-wide "**Conservation and Open Space Preservation Priorities Overlay**" (Overlay). The concept for such an Overlay, reflecting first-round analysis of land and resources is illustrated on Figure 5-1 (page 22), which shows lands in the County characterized by a combination of:

- Natural constraints to development (e.g. high slope gradients, floodways) that will likely remain largely in open space due to significant limitations on their development potential,
- Areas that are already preserved as habitat or open space, including existing state and regional parks, wildlife management areas, the federal NCA (National Conservation Area), and lands acquired for open space purposes by city or county government, and
- Public priorities for resource conservation and open space preservation, particularly important wildlife habitat, stream corridors, special places (e.g. unique geologic features and cultural resources sites/corridors), and other areas specified in existing city or county plans as important for future open space or recreation.

This "Overlay" mapping would complement relevant County and city comprehensive plans and serve as guidance to jurisdictions and landowners in making future land use decisions. It is a way of prioritizing places and areas where emphasis should be placed on preserving a high proportion of the land in resource conservation and open space. It is not expected that either [1] development would be precluded entirely from within this Overlay (it would be impossible to conserve every area with potential for conservation), or [2] no valuable open space can be achieved outside of the Overlay boundary. Recommendations related to the Overlay (both mapping and underlying concept) include:

- All lands shown within the Overlay are considered important for emphasis on conservation and open space preservation. However, a hierarchy of relative priority ratings should provide guidance for any public funding initiatives aimed at direct acquisition of open space. Simply put, those areas rated "highest" on the Overlay should receive the highest priority for acquisition.
- It is recognized that a substantial proportion of the land within the Overlay is privately owned, and that some development will occur within these areas. Nonetheless, a high proportion of this land should be preserved in open space.
- Not all resource conservation and open space lands need to be in public ownership. Valuable habitat and other open space values can be protected as part of long-term private ownership patterns, through such techniques as conservation subdivisions and conservation easements.
- Within the Overlay, a high priority should be placed on the ideal of a achieving a net increase (at minimum no net loss) in public land ownership—dedicated to open space values—through land exchanges, acquisitions by local agencies, or other available mechanisms.
- Planning for and management of the open space system will require a careful balance between resource protection and provision of access and recreation. Unmanaged access and usage can damage, even destroy, the very resources that draw us to these lands. Recreation must be planned and managed to achieve, not threaten, long term resource sustainability.
- The open space resources on which the Task Force effort is focused attract many different, sometimes conflicting user groups. Within the limits of long-term sustainability/carrying capacity, all user groups should be accommodated.
- The results shown on Figure 5-1 are a "work in progress". Development and adoption of such an Overlay will require review, verification and refinement of analysis, public involvement, and further response to stated public priorities, resource sustainability and public use issues.

The county-wide open space pattern concept shown on Figure 5-1 is comprised of five important place-based framework elements, each of which deserve specific, tailored attention and recommendations:

The Foothills—Task Force Recommendations (page 25)**:**

- Develop and apply a consistent plan and set of open space preservation and recreation standards governing the lands in the foothills countywide; achieve a high percentage of open space preservation in the Overlay area.
- Achieve a net gain, at minimum accept no net loss, of the open space values represented by tracts of Bureau of Land Management and state endowment lands within the foothills; seek to consolidate these public ownerships within the Overlay area where feasible and appropriate through land exchanges, local acquisition of isolated tracts or other means.
- Carefully balance recreational use locations and levels in the foothills to protect resource values, accommodate user groups, and minimize user conflicts. Restrictions on access in some areas (either overall or seasonally) will likely be necessary (e.g., motor vehicle access should be limited to established roads and designated trails. There is likely no "one size fits all" solution to these challenges; a creative combination of solutions will be necessary.
- On a location-specific scale, the highest priority should be assigned to preservation of the following resources, sites and special features in the foothills:
  - Big game winter range
  - Prime riparian corridors (e.g. Dry Creek, Willow Creek)
  - Prime sage-scrub/steppe habitat
  - Eagle-designated open space overlay in north foothills
  - The ~2,000 acres surrounding the operating areas of the County landfill
  - Rocky Canyon West (north of Eagle)—with potential for a regional open space preserve
  - Dry Creek corridor overall and upper Dry Creek watershed
  - Goodale's Cutoff (historic Oregon Trail route), including public trail opportunities
  - Hillside to the Hollow
  - Corridor from Seaman's Gulch to Polecat Gulch to Bogus Basin Road.

The Boise River—Task Force Recommendations (page 27)**:**

- Establish and protect open space and connectivity along and access to the river.
- Create a Boise River System Ordinance that is consistent within each jurisdiction along the entire Boise River in Ada County. A key emphasis of this ordinance should be on open space and habitat preservation and provision of recreational opportunities.
- Seek funding for purchase of land or development rights in the floodplain. Utilize public/private partnerships for acquisition from willing landowners.
- Protect riverside cottonwood forests and floodplains through economic incentives, purchases, and/or regulation.
- Achieve a strong open space and conservation component as part of the Boise River Corridor Study to be undertaken as part of the Army Corps of Engineers project.
- Ensure long-term sustainability of natural resources where river corridor open space is focused in such resources; and within sustainability limits, accommodate multiple (non-motorized) user groups.
- Require development applications along the river to illustrate how open space lands will be owned and managed to assure long term conservation and recreation goals are achieved.
- Formulate with public input a comprehensive Open Space and Habitat Management Plan for Barber Park's wild areas..

- Extend the Boise River Greenbelt and connections east into Boise County, west into Canyon County, laterally into developing communities, and along the Oregon Trail to Bonneville Point, incorporating loop, scenic, and interpretative opportunities, with public and private partners.
- Specific, priority action/project recommendations:
  - Fund deferred maintenance of the Greenbelt Path
  - Complete a recreational path along the Boise River to the county line
  - Develop:
    - Boise River Water Trail connecting to Canyon County.
    - Trailhead and path on the Oregon Trail from Highway 21 to Bonneville Point
    - Riverside path from Highway 21 to Lucky Peak on south bank
    - Loop path along north rim of Black Cliffs through The Cliffs Planned Community to provide connectivity to other public trails
    - Loop path along south rim of Black Cliffs on public land

South County—Task Force Recommendations (page 29)**:**

- Review and revise as necessary all relevant county ordinances to assure that ample open spaces, especially in the Figure 5-1 Overlay area, will be provided for current and future residents. Encourage the cities to conduct corresponding ordinance reviews and revisions.
- Use BLM land outside of the Open Space Overlay in land exchanges that increase public conservation and recreation values (See: Public Lands, Section 6.3.3, and the above discussions of the Open Space Overlay and the Foothills).
- Create regional open space parks/preserves at Hubbard Reservoir, Blacks Creek Reservoir and Indian Creek Reservoir and Kuna Butte and Initial Point.
- Acquire title to Hubbard Recreation Area from the State of Idaho, and develop the property to provide permanent public open space, wildlife habitat, trails, wetlands, and fisheries
- Provide connectivity (non-motorized paths and habitat linkages) along Indian, Ten Mile, and Mason Creeks, between Hubbard Recreation Area, Blacks Creek and Indian Creek Reservoirs, and between communities and open space areas.
- Pursue trails along key irrigation canals, such as Ridenbaugh, Mora, and Rawson, that can provide regional connectivity; work with landowners to create paths along other creeks, canals and drains to provide local connections.
- Involve a broad range of user groups in developing the trails system.

Snake River – Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (NCA)—Task Force Recommendations (page 31)**:**

- Continue active cooperation and coordination with BLM in implementing its Resource Management Plan for the NCA. Focus on ensuring and augmenting public recreation opportunities, consistent with the natural resource protection mandate of the NCA. Particular priority should be placed on access and facilities along the Snake River corridor (in particular a Snake River Water Trail to provide a recreational connection with neighboring counties

Stitching It All Together—A County-Wide Trail System—Task Force Recommendations (page 32)**:**

- Adopt and implement a county-wide Open Space Corridor network, using the network shown on Figure 5-2 (page 33) as a starting point. This network will provide a regional system of greenways, or linear parks linking [1] the cities with one another, and [2] the cities with the

open space system proposed in the foothills (north, central and east), along the Boise River, and in the South County/NCA/Snake River Canyon.

- Recognize, adopt, and implement the trail system for the North Foothills included within Eagle's 2007 Comprehensive Plan. As part of this process resolve questions of resource carrying capacity and accommodation of multiple, potentially conflicting user groups.
- Use the Eagle North Foothills trail system (process and product) as a model for preparing trail plans in other portions of the county. In all cases, address relevant issues related to resource carrying capacity and accommodation of multiple user groups.
- As part of planning for and adoption of the regional Open Space Corridor network and sub-area trail planning system(s), specify locations and design solutions for crossings of major barriers, such as highways.
- Specific, priority action/project recommendations (in addition to those included above):
  - Eagle Velodrome to Boise Ridge Trail
  - Boise River Water Trail
  - Black Cliffs/Diversion Dam trails in east Boise – cliff-top both north and south of the river, and along south bank of Diversion Pool

Accomplishing County-Wide Conservation & Open Space Preservation

Policy Recommendations (page 37):

P (Policy) 1. Conduct Public Process**:** The County should (and the cities are encouraged to) participate in the effort being put together by Idaho Smart Growth and Land Trust for the Treasure Valley to involve the public in gaining support for the strategies in this report.

P2. Establish County-wide Open Space Advisory Committee**:** Create a county-wide open space advisory committee to provide guidance on issues of regional interest and to carry forward the recommendations of this plan.

P3. Adopt the Ada County Parks, Open Space and Trails Plan , with revisions and refinements consistent with Task Force recommendations derived from this Task Force.

P4. Review and Adjust Existing Ordinances**:** The County should (and the cities are encouraged to) review and revise their ordinances to ensure they can implement the open space plan as adopted.

P5. Achieve Consistent and Complementary Open Space Language in County and City Comprehensive Plans.

P6. Prepare and Adopt Planning Guides**:** All jurisdictions within Ada County should adopt referenced policy guides that fall within their 'planning boundary' per the planning boundaries identified in the Blueprint for Good Growth Area of Impact Policy and Process as adopted by the Blueprint Consortium. (BGG GM-7 & GM-18).

P7. Prepare and Adopt Consistent Policies for Key Geographic Areas**:**

- Adopt one set of policy guidelines and ordinance for development in the foothills.
- Adopt one set of policy guidelines and ordinance for development along the river corridor.
- Make completion of the greenbelt a high priority.
- Adopt policy guidelines for providing open space for south Ada County.
- In conjunction with the BLM (i.e. consistent with the BLM's Resource Management Plan) adopt policies regarding the Snake River and Birds of Prey areas.
- Adopt one set of policy guidelines for creation of a connected, county-wide trail system.

Tools for Implementation: Open Space as Part of the Development Process (page 40)

Regulatory Mechanisms (RM)

RM1. Design Criteria**:**

- Establish consistent, county-wide (i.e. county and cities) standards for development which will encourage the inclusion of open space and trail connectivity while providing the developer the ability to achieve higher densities.
- Create consistent ordinance language county-wide that directs developers to connect their open space and paths/trails to the larger community's existing or planned-for open space and pathways when available.
- Establish a design review process that complements the inclusion of open space, and assures the quality of design in higher density product.

RM2. Cluster and Density Bonus**:** Jurisdictions should write these tools into all applicable codes to provide incentives to land owners for preservation of natural open space.

RM3. Conservation Subdivision**:** Create an ordinance for Conservation Subdivision in the County and cities.

RM4. Flood plain Ordinance**:** Establish a county-wide floodplain ordinance based on policy recommendation P7, above.

RM5. Amend the existing Planned Community Ordinance**:** Ada County should amend the existing Planned Community Ordinance to increase the minimum requirement for natural open space in rural areas with a high concentration of natural resource and open space values (as defined via the Overlay). A relatively low (10-20%) requirement may be appropriate in unconstrained areas or within existing City areas of impact; however a goal of 50% or more should be achieved in areas with high resource/open space values.

Incentive/Voluntary (IM) Mechanisms

IM1. Purchase of Development Rights (PDRs)**:** Have a fund available to use when opportunities arise to purchase development rights for land identified as important for open space preservation.

IM2. Voluntary Real Estate Transfer Fees**:** Continue to encourage this tool to fund the maintenance and stewardship of open space within developments.

IM3. Voluntary Donations: [a] Consider options to increase incentives for donations of land or development rights (e.g., property tax breaks or statewide tax incentives); and [b] Have each local jurisdiction support a resolution encouraging congress to adopt the improved tax benefits for conservation easements.

IM4. Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs)**:** Implement a TDR program, based on an adopted County-wide Open Space Plan that specifies "sending" and "receiving" areas.

IM5. Historic Preservation Act**:** Use this Act where there is a nexus between open space and historic preservation as a way of conserving the open space as well as the historic value.

IM6. Density**:** [a] Provide incentive-based alternatives for preservation of natural open space, including density bonuses, density transfers, or transfer of density rights; and [b] Develop an educational program to help the public understand density in relationship to open space.

Tools for Implementation: Open Space Acquisition/Funding (AF) (page 42)

AF1. County-wide Acquisition Fund**:** The County should establish a fund for the purpose of purchasing open space, using monies from the general fund (committed each year during the budget process) as well as from the other mechanisms described below. Cities should be invited and encouraged to participate in this fund.

AF2. Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT)**:** Designate Ada County's entire PILT payment each year to a Regional Open Space Fund.

AF3. Federal and State Grants and Programs**:** Hire a full time staff person dedicated to understanding these various programs and writing grant requests for the purpose of open space acquisition, conservation, and trails and pathways development.

AF4. Serial Levy**):** The Task Force recommends a serial levy. The timing and amount to be raised by a serial levy is up to the discretion of the Ada County Board of Commissioners. Funds will be dedicated solely to the acquisition and management of a county-wide open space system and corridor network.

AF5. Tipping Fee at Landfill**:** Implement an added fee to the tipping fee at the landfill for Open Space acquisition. This would impact the solid waste rates and could compete with recycling. Some nexus for Open Space would need to be established.

AF6. Tax Deed Property**:** Determine if tax deed property contains conservation values. If it does, the County should designate it as open space land and retain ownership. If not, then use the county portion of proceeds to feed acquisition fund.

AF7. Impact Fees**:** Develop a capital improvement plan to determine whether impact fees might be necessary. This should include an analysis of impact fees necessary with a serial levy and without. Negotiate with all cities to determine commitment to impact fees.

Tools for Implementation: Public Lands (PL) (page 43)

PL1. Land Exchanges**:** Utilize land exchanges and acquisitions to increase public lands within the Overlay (See Section 5.2). Public lands outside of the Overlay area should be considered for possible disposal in order to acquire higher priority open space within the Overlay areas, consistent with the public land managing agency's mission.

PL2. Recreation and Public Purposes Act (RPP)**:** [a] Use the federal RPP program to acquire public lands for public parks, open space and trails when the level of development required by RPP is consistent with local and regional open space plans; and [b] If the community's desire for parcels of public land is to retain its natural values, habitat and trail opportunities, consider other tools such as a Cooperative Management Agreement to partner with Federal entities for management and stewardship.

PL3. Cooperative Management Agreements**:** Consider Cooperative Management Agreements and public/private partnerships to jointly fund and manage public lands deemed important to a Conservation, Open Space and Trails system as an alternative to the RPP process.

1. Introduction

1.1 Task Force Formation and Purpose

The Ada County Board of Commissioners formed the Open Space Advisory Task Force (Task Force) through Resolution 1459 on March 29th, 2007. The Board charged the Task force with:

- Create conservation priorities in northwest, northeast , southwest, and southeast Ada County
- Identify priorities for public open space acquisition (at a conceptual level, not targeting specific private properties)
- Provide detailed recommendations for funding or incentives to create and maintain the public open space priorities
- Evaluate existing public lands and, if considered desirable and feasible, make recommendations for exchange or consolidation of these public lands

The Task Force mission is part of the County's process of crafting a new Comprehensive Plan, including an associated Parks, Open Space and Trails Plan. The County adopted a new overall Comprehensive Plan in 2007. However, the draft Parks, Open Space and Trails Plan has not been finalized pending the results of this Task Force effort.

This report presents the results of a year-long effort by the OSTF to meet the objectives defined in Resolution 1459 and provide more detailed guidance for completion of the Parks, Open Space and Trails Plan. It identifies the criteria and values we seek in open space, provides maps of desired locations, land types and connections, describes the various tools available for conserving open space, and recommends actions for jurisdictions to accomplish the desired conservation of open space.

1.2 Task Force Membership and Organization

Task Force membership is listed on the Acknowledgements page inside the front cover of this document. Also recognized on that page are several other agency, organization and business representatives who made key contributions to the Task Force work effort and helped with the preparation of this report.

The Task Force met monthly for the first nine months and bi-weekly for the remainder of its year-long effort. The group was organized as follows:

- **Leadership**
  - Chair – Charles McDevitt
  - Vice-Chair – Judy Peavey-Derr
- **Working Committees**
  - Land and Natural Resources (nicknamed "viewshed") committee – led by Frank Martin and John Petrovsky
  - Recreation Committee – led by Tim Breuer and John Caywood
  - Mechanisms, Tools & Techniques Committee – led by Mary Ann Jordon and Deanna Smith
- **Analysis and Product**
  - Report/Findings and Recommendations – John Petrovsky, Deanna Smith, Tim Breuer, John Caywood
  - Resource and Use Mapping – Charles Baun and Brandt Elwell

1.3 Scope of the Task Force Effort

The Task Force work effort proceeded through the following general steps, culminating in the findings and recommendations contained in this report:

- Assessment of current open space and recreation planning programs in Ada County (organization, jurisdiction, roles, responsibilities, and extent of coordination);
- Review and synthesis of public priorities for natural resource conservation, open space preservation and regional recreation, as identified in prior planning efforts;
- Development of criteria for defining high-priority areas/sites for conservation, open space, and regional recreational emphasis;
- Analysis of existing natural resource, open space and regional recreation conditions and mapping of resources according to priority criteria;
- Inventory and analysis of available and potentially applicable mechanisms, tools and techniques for preserving open space and providing regional recreation facilities;
- Formulation of recommendations (locations and extent of desired open space preservation and regional recreation, especially trail systems; most feasible and applicable mechanisms, tools and techniques for accomplishing desired preservation and recreation facilities; and next steps)

Overall, the work of the Task Force should be a considered a beginning, not an end. This perspective is important because:

- The Task Force effort has not included a public participation/involvement program. While every effort has been made to respond directly and faithfully to public input received in prior planning efforts, the interested public should be provided opportunities to comment on and contribute to this county-wide open space planning and implementation program.
- All mapping and analysis has relied on existing, readily available information and volunteer effort. No funding was available for complete investigation and synthesis of all potentially relevant data sources, verification of data, or collection of new information.
- Related to the above, the emphasis of the Task Force effort has been on providing [1] a conceptual framework for County-wide resource conservation and open space preservation, [2] a credible but broad-brush view of desired and priority long term open space patterns/systems—on the ground, and [3] a first-pass at identifying the most feasible and effective mechanism for accomplishing the desired and priority open space patterns.

More work is needed in each of these regards to achieve the most fundamental and over-arching recommendation of the Task Force: preparation and adoption by the County and its cities of a County-Wide Conservation, Open Space, and Regional Recreation Plan.

1.4 Structure and Content of This Report

This report is organized generally according to the work steps described above:

Chapter 2 provides an overview of current open space planning in Ada County today, including involved jurisdictions, agencies and organizations, their roles and responsibilities, and how they relate with one another.

Chapter 3 reports the conservation, open space and regional recreation priorities that the public has expressed in prior planning efforts, and in plans by cities for major, currently open areas of the county.

Chapter 4 summarizes the natural resource, land use and recreation mapping and analysis work that serves as the basis for Task Force recommendations.

Chapter 5 presents Task Force findings, recommendations and next steps related to resource conservation, open space preservation, and regional recreation systems

Chapter 6 provides analysis, recommendations and next steps related to the mechanisms, tools and techniques available for achieving the recommendations.

2. Open Space in Ada County Today

2.1 Involved Jurisdictions, Agencies and Organizations

Natural resource, open space and recreation planning and management in Ada County is conducted by many local jurisdictions, state and federal agencies, and other involved organizations. The array of jurisdictions and agencies involved, and the geographic scope of their planning authority/role is summarized below and illustrated on Figure 2-1. A sample listing of other involved organizations is also provided

Local Jurisdictions

- Ada County: The County has jurisdiction and responsibility for natural resource, open space and recreation planning on all private, city-owned, and county-owned lands in the County outside of city Areas of Impact (AOIs).
- Cities: Boise, Eagle, Garden City, Kuna, Meridian and Star each have jurisdiction and responsibility for planning on all private and city-owned land within their corporate boundaries. The cities also take the lead in preparing plans for their AOIs; however, the County has primary land use decision-making authority until land is formally annexed to the respective city, and thus, coordination is required between the cities and the County. In recent years, instances have also occurred in which cities have taken the initiative to prepare comprehensive plans for lands outside their current AOIs, presumably in anticipation of AOI expansion.
- Ada County Highway District (ACHD): While not involved in open space planning, ACHD does lead in planning for the bicycle trail/lane network in the County. This activity is relevant to plans for a county-wide trails system.

State Agencies

From the standpoint of broad-scale natural resource, open space and recreation planning, state land ownership and administration in Ada County falls primarily under the jurisdiction of three state agencies: the Idaho Departments of Fish and Game, Lands, and Parks and Recreation. State lands managed and planned for by these agencies are shown on Figure 2-1.

- Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG): IDFG plans for and manages a large land area (the Boise River Wildlife Management Area) in the foothills east of Boise, north and south of Lucky Peak Reservoir. The intent of IDFG is to protect and conserve wildlife resource values in perpetuity. Thus, with few exceptions, IDFG lands are de facto part of the open space resource in the County. IDFG plans for and allows public recreation on its lands, but only to the extent that recreational uses do not conflict with the agency's primary conservation mission.
- Idaho Department of Lands (IDL): IDL plans for and manages state endowment trust lands. The primary intent of this state ownership is to provide a perpetual stream of income to trust beneficiaries (e.g., Public School Fund, Agricultural College Fund, Charitable Institutions Fund and several others). While many tracts of trust land in the County are presently open, undeveloped and used only for resource-based activities such as grazing and outdoor recreation, these lands are not a "guaranteed" part of the public open space resource in perpetuity. Given the primary income-generating mission for these lands, IDL can and does consider active use and development over time, including cultivation, mineral development, and commercial or residential development. Similar to any agency with planning authority

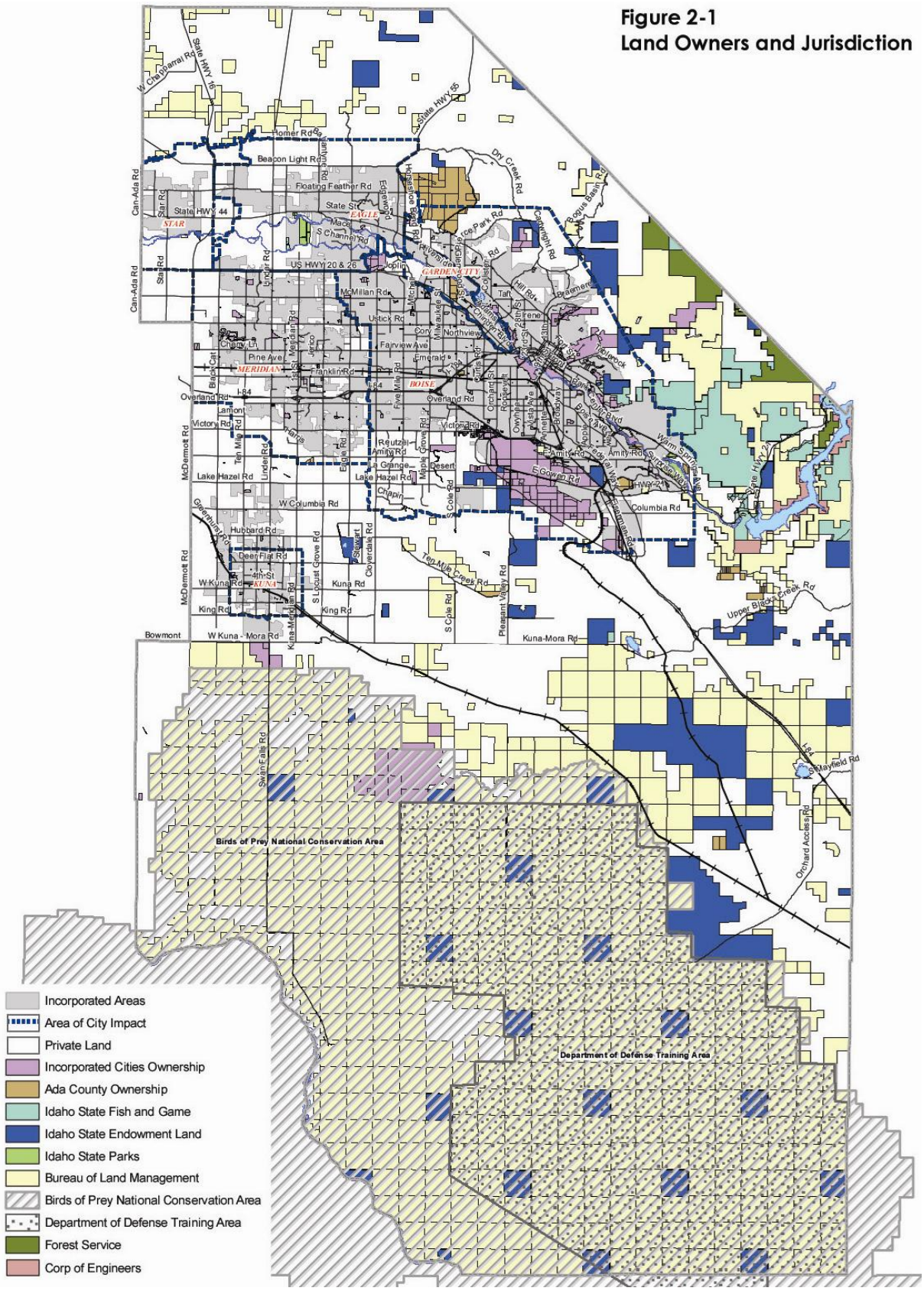


Figure 2-1
Land Owners and Jurisdiction
Incorporated Areas
Area of City Impact
Private Land
Incorporated Cities Ownership
Ada County Ownership
Idaho State Fish and Game
Idaho State Endowment Land
Idaho State Parks
Bureau of Land Management
Birds of Prey National Conservation Area
Department of Defense Training Area
Forest Service
Corp of Engineers
Birds of Prey National Conservation Area
Department of Defense Training Area
EAGLE
STAR
GARDEN CITY
MERIDIAN
BOISE
KUNA
Bowmont
Homer Rd
Beacon Light Rd
Floating Feather Rd
State St
State HWY 44
S Channel Rd
US HWY 20 & 26
McMillan Rd
Ustick Rd
Fairview Ave
Pine Ave
Overland Rd
Victory Rd
Ten Mile Rd
Lake Hazel Rd
W Columbia Rd
Hubbard Rd
Deer Flat Rd
W Kuna Rd
King Rd
W Kuna - Mora Rd
Kuna Rd
Amity Rd
E Columbia Rd
Kuna-Mora Rd
Upper Black Cat Creek Rd
Mayfield Rd
Orchard Access Rd
Swan Falls Rd
Dry Creek Rd
Hill Rd
Warm Springs Ave
Ten Mile Creek Rd
Pleasant Valley Rd
Cole Rd
Eagle Rd
Linder Rd
Meridian Rd
Can-Ada Rd
McDermott Rd
Star Rd
Black Cat Rd
Locust Grove Rd
Kuna-Meridian Rd
S Cole Rd
Cloverdale Rd
Greenhurst Rd
Five Mile Rd
Maple Grove Rd
Desert
La Grange
Chapin
Reutzel
Franklin Rd
Joplin
Mitchell
Milwaukee
Cory
Northview
Emerald
Jerico
Chinden Blvd
Fairview
Collister
Taft
Dreamerie
Pierce Park Rd
Hidden Springs Dr
Sunset Peak Rd
Bogus Basin Rd
Cartwright Rd
Lucky Peak Lake
State HWY 21
Lake

and responsibility, IDL considers compatibility with and impacts on surrounding land uses in making decisions.

- Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation (IDPR): Within Ada County, IDPR plans for and manages Lucky Peak State Park and Eagle Island State Park along the Boise River in Eagle. IDPR's mission is to improve the quality of life in Idaho through outdoor recreation and resource stewardship.

Federal Agencies

- Bureau of Land Management (BLM): Most federal land in Ada County is under the jurisdiction of the BLM. As shown on Figure 2-1, BLM administers nearly half the land in Ada County, primarily [1] in south (including the Birds of Prey National Conservation Area and Department of Defense Orchard Training Area), and [2] in the eastern foothills. Many smaller tracts of BLM land, ranging in size from 40 acres to a few thousand acres are scattered in the north foothills and south of Boise. BLM's mission (implemented through Resource Management Plans) is to manage its public land resource generally for multiple use and sustained yield, emphasizing resource-based uses and activities (such as outdoor recreation, wildlife habitat, grazing, mineral harvest, etc.). Management of special areas, such as the Birds of Prey Area and military training area, attends particularly to ensuring that allowed uses are compatible/do not conflict with the area's primary purpose.

  As a rule, BLM land can be considered part of the County open space resource in perpetuity. However, there is a very important caveat to this: BLM can and does dispose of, exchange, and/or acquire lands if such action is in the public interest. This fact is particularly important to current and future open space planning in Ada County because:

  - Several requests have been made by both local jurisdictions and private parties to acquire tracts of BLM land, especially isolated tracts in foothills and south of Kuna and Boise;
  - BLM is increasingly finding that management of isolated (particularly small) tracts is inefficient and problematic, even ineffective;
  - The Four Rivers District of the BLM, which includes Ada County, is presently initiating a process to update is Resource Management Plan. As part of this planning process, the agency will both [1] consider and decide on requests for acquisition or exchange of lands by cities, the county or private parties, and [2] broadly assess options to improve management efficiency and effectiveness by disposing of some lands (particularly isolated parcels) or through exchanges with other land owners to consolidate ownership and management.

  Thus, the future status of BLM lands in the County, focusing particularly on isolated tracts, is open to discussion, and the pros and cons of disposals, exchanges, and consolidations in specific areas will need to be assessed. Generally, the BLM is required to consider the plans and concerns of local agencies as an important factor in making decisions in these regards.

- Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) and Army Corps of Engineers (COE): These agencies own lands associated with the Lucky Peak Reservoir and irrigation and flood control works along/near the Boise River downstream. Subject to public safety concerns and operational requirements, much of this land is de facto part of the local open space resource. The land is managed for resource protection and public recreation, in large part through agreement with IDPR (i.e. Lucky Peak State Park) and IDFG.

Other Involved Organizations

Important contributions to open space and recreation in the county have historically been, and continue to be, made by other organizations; these contributions range from planning through management of lands to facility development. Examples of these organizations include:

- Idaho Foundation for Parks and Lands
- Southwest Mountain Bikers Association
- Ridge to Rivers
- Foundation for Ada and Canyon County Trials
- Land Trust of the Treasure Valley (LTTV)
- Ada Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD)
- Southwest Idaho Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D)

2.2 Relevance To The Task Force Mission—A County-Wide Perspective

Both the mission of the Task Force), and the clear desires of the public, point to the desirability of and need for a county-wide view in planning for/providing open space and recreation. Given this, the most relevant questions regarding the above overview of involved jurisdictions, agencies and organizations are:

1. To what extent are the natural resource, open space and recreation planning efforts of involved entities coordinated to create a county-wide "whole"?
2. Can/should steps be taken to institute or improve planning for and providing open space and recreation in a coordinated, county-wide manner? If yes, what might these steps be?

The answer to the first question is relatively straight-forward. At present, there is no formal mechanism, agreement, or central entity aimed at coordinating county-wide resource, open space or recreation planning and unifying the efforts of the various jurisdictions, agencies and other organizations into a conceptual whole. At the local level, most cities and the County each plan for resource conservation, open space and recreation within their jurisdictional boundaries. While consultations do occur between cities and the County, there is no formal program or agreement to ensure that important linkages are made across jurisdictional boundaries (e.g. contiguity of open space systems, trail connectivity, etc.) or that individual city and county plans, regulations and strategies are consistent and synergistic (e.g. open space goals for the foothills, or criteria for design of the Boise River greenbelt).

The result can be inconsistent and/or disconnected local open space plans and requirements, with the clearest example being the varying provisions of the County, Boise and Eagle plans for the foothills environment.

This absence of "one voice" in planning for resource conservation, open space and recreation also has implications for the future of state and federal lands in the county. In large part, state and federal lands can play a major role in long-term preservation of open space and provision of recreation opportunities. However, especially in the case of state endowment lands and federal BLM lands, the agencies responsible for administering these lands have mandates and requirements that can result in land use or status/ownership decisions that can result in lost opportunities for county open space systems. In particular:

- The Idaho Department of Lands mandate to generate income from state endowment lands means there is no guarantee that locations where these lands are currently open and used for recreation will remain in this condition. However, it is becoming clear that some endowment lands may be highly desirable as part of future open space and recreation systems (important

examples of this occur in the foothills). If long-term protection of key endowment lands as open space is to occur, specific needs/desires/proposals must be identified and the means must be found to compensate the State for the income-generating potential of these lands (e.g. through land exchanges or other measures).

- In the case of BLM lands, as noted above, an update of the agency's resource management plan is now beginning. As part of this process, the future status of all isolated and "border" tracts of BLM lands in the County will be reviewed. One motivation for the BLM will be to improve its management efficiency by disposing of scattered tracts and/or consolidating its scattered parcels into larger, more manageable ownership patterns through land exchanges. BLM decisions in this regard can either contribute to or foreclose long-term open space and recreation in the county.

In both of these cases, a unified, county-wide voice in working with IDL and BLM would ensure that their land use/status decisions, take into account long-term resource conservation, open space and recreation for county residents.

These realities strongly suggest that the answer to the first part of question 2, above, is YES. As a result, part of the Task Force effort has included exploring potential ways to better plan for and provide open space and recreation in a coordinated, county-wide manner. Recommendations in this regard are provided in Chapters 5 and 6.

3. Conservation Values and Open Space Priorities

3.1 Introduction

A number of significant land use/comprehensive planning efforts over the past few years have sought to define public conservation values and open space priorities, both county-wide and in key sub-areas (particularly the foothills and along the Boise River). Public input county-wide has been consistent, with clear and unequivocal statements about priorities for natural resource conservation, open space preservation, and outdoor recreation. County and city efforts have articulated conservation and open space priorities related to specific sub-areas, resource types and/or locations. This prior work can and should serve as a solid foundation on which to base the Task Force's work.

This chapter reviews and synthesizes the conservation values and open space priorities expressed in relevant county and city planning efforts:

- Section 3.2 provides an overview of findings from the major county-wide efforts that have addressed open space;
- Section 3.3 summarizes the findings and recommendations of Boise and Eagle'sefforts that have addressed the County's foothills resources;
- Section 3.4 notes the long-standing emphasis that has been placed on open space and recreation along the Boise River corridor, and
- Section 3.5 presents an inventory of specific resources, locations, and features in the County that have been identified (i.e. in county-wide and city planning efforts) for open space conservation and/or regional recreation priority.

3.2 County-Wide Planning Efforts—What the Community Has Said

The most current and illustrative county-wide planning efforts that have sought to define public values and priorities related to open space are the Blueprint for Good Growth (Blueprint) and the Draft Ada County Parks, Open Space and Trails Plan.

Blueprint for Good Growth (Phase I Report, September, 2006)

The Blueprint Phase I report states:

- "The natural environment is the key factor in the local quality of life...decisions about development and transportation need to be made simultaneously with preservation of natural areas and the environment and the creation of park, recreation and open-space areas."
- "Despite the large percentage of publicly owned land within Ada County, open space retention within and abutting developed areas of the county as a key component of the local quality of life for its aesthetic, recreational, environmental and economic benefits."
- There is a "need for developing open space standards within the land use jurisdictions of Ada County" and for the County "to work with the cities to create public open space."

In addressing these perspectives, the Phase I report includes the following under the heading of "Environment and Recreation":

- Guiding principle: "We will protect the natural resources that we value...the natural resources we value most (include) the Foothills, the Boise River and floodplains, Lake Lowell and agricultural lands."

- Open Space and Natural Resource Goal: "To develop an interconnected system of open spaces and natural resource areas that:
  - Protect water quality
  - Protect development from flood hazards
  - Provide an accessible, system of greenways and trails
  - Protect wildlife habitat by avoiding fragmentation of habitat areas and corridors
  - Minimize development on steep hillsides
  - Provide appropriate recreational opportunities."
- Open Space Objective: Within two years of adoption of the Blueprint, develop a county-wide open space and greenway plan to facilitate the establishment of a coordinated system that helps achieve the open space and natural resource goal. This plan should:
  - Involve diverse stakeholders including irrigation, recreation, conservation, agricultural, transportation, flood control, development, neighborhood, and fish and wildlife interests.
  - Recognize and integrate open space, trails, and pathway planning completed by each community and the county to date.
  - Recommend non-regulatory and regulatory tools such as conservation design subdivisions, tax incentives, transfer of development rights, and wildlife mitigation strategies to achieve open space protection goals.
  - Establish context-sensitive natural and active recreation open space standards.
- Public Lands Policy: Coordinate with state, federal and local agencies to *(among other objectives)*:
  - Maintain or enhance access to public lands for public access...
  - Maintain or enhance connectivity between public lands for recreational or wildlife purposes
  - Identify potential land swaps that result in more efficient protection of resources within Ada County

Ada County Parks, Open Space and Trail Plan (Draft April, 2007)

The County's parks, open space and trails planning effort sought to [1] identify public values and priorities related to open space and recreation, and [2] define/confirm what the county's role should be in providing for open space and recreation (i.e., how the County should focus its staff and financial resources, especially relative to those of other jurisdictions and organizations).

In the first regard, public input related to priorities for open space and recreation was obtained via the work of a subcommittee, public workshops and public questionnaires. What the community said is summarized below:

- Desired "End State":
  - System of large open space reserves and buffers between developed areas
  - General access to open space lands
  - Protection of natural resources/environment
  - Regional parks serving the entire county
  - Broad geographic distribution of parks and recreation areas (i.e. resources for all County residents)
  - County-wide trail system (serving multiple uses including preservation of equestrian opportunities)

  - Connections between major open spaces and developed areas, parks, schools and other origin/destination points in the county
  - Connections with resource areas and open space outside of the County

- What to Preserve:
  - Wildlife habitat (particularly critical habitat, and large, contiguous areas to support wildlife populations and provide "close-in" opportunities to view and appreciate these resources)
  - Lakes and reservoirs (including provision of waterfront parks)
  - Rivers and stream corridors—floodways and floodplains (particularly riparian and wetland habitats, and for water-related parks and trails, as well as public safety)
  - Scenic resources/viewpoints, especially the foothills
  - Cultural/historic resources (sites, historic trails and roads, irrigation works)
  - Unique geologic or other natural features
  - Canal corridors as trail opportunities
  - Other unique or special resources or places (e.g., geologic features, hot springs, rock shelters)
  - Foothills (as a special resource area, with large blocks of undeveloped land, important habitat areas, and trail systems/access)
  - Boise River (as a special resource area—with riparian and wetland habitat, parks and trails)

In the second regard, the message received from the public is clear—reflecting and reinforcing the values and priorities noted above. The County should not be "in the business" of providing highly developed parks, play fields, sports complexes, etc. Instead, its focus should be on:

- Preserving natural open space, particularly large, interconnected areas that protect natural and cultural resources both "in their own right" and for public access and enjoyment;
- Establishing large-scale regional parks focused on natural and cultural resource values and serving the entire county; and
- Providing an interconnected, county-wide trail system for recreational access to these open space reserves and regional parks (with trails and associated facilities accommodating a variety of user groups, including hikers, equestrians, and bicyclists).

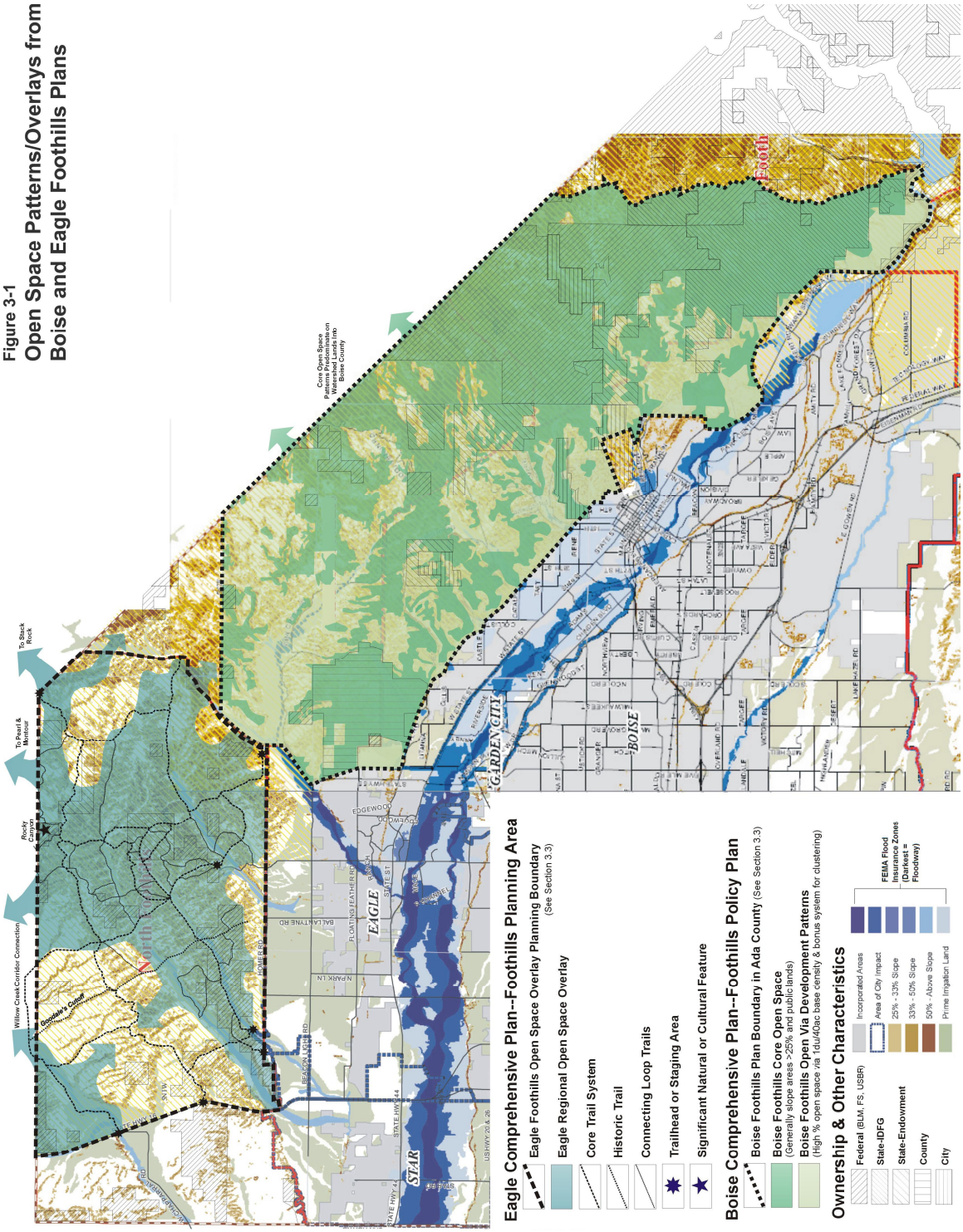
3.3 The Foothills—Boise and Eagle Comprehensive Plan Efforts

Public emphasis on the County's foothills as a priority for preservation of open space and provision of resource-based recreation is clearly expressed in the County planning effort summarized above. Further reflecting this emphasis, the cities of Boise and Eagle, as the two cities bordering most of the County's foothills landscape, have prepared and adopted comprehensive plan amendments which address priorities for open space and recreation in these foothills (hand in hand with defining desired development patterns, given that most foothills land is in private ownership).

City of Boise: *Boise City Foothills Policy Plan* (March, 1997)

Boise's Foothills Policy Plan covers most of the Ada County Foothills north and east of the City, between State Highway 55 in the northwest and 21 in the southeast. The boundary of the Boise Foothills planning area within Ada County is shown on Figure 3-1.

Figure 3-1
Open Space Patterns/Overlays from Boise and Eagle Foothills Plans



The Foothills Policy Plan is a complete Comprehensive Plan Amendment for the City, including a wide range of planning and policy considerations. However, its primary "bottom line" emphasis for the future of the foothills planning area is natural resource and open space preservation. The Plan's land use map shows only three major land use classifications:

- Buildable Areas (private and state endowment lands in areas predominantly characterized by slopes of <25%)
- Slope Protection Areas (private and state endowment lands in areas predominantly characterized by slopes of >25%)
- Open Space (publicly owned land under BLM, USFS, USBR, IDFG and city jurisdiction)

On all private and state endowment lands, in both Buildable and Slope Protection Areas, a base development density of 1 dwelling unit per 40 acres is assigned, with development prohibited on lands with slopes >25%.

An interpretation of the fundamental result of these classifications, from the standpoint of open space conservation and preservation is illustrated on Figure 3-1, as follows:

- Areas shown as **Core Open Space** combine the Slope Protection and Open Space classifications from the Plan's land use map. In the former regard, most land in this classification would remain in open space (whether public or private) simply due to the predominance of slopes >25%, on which development would be prohibited; while some development could occur, its extent would be limited due to [1] the very low base density assigned overall, [2] the limited extent of buildable land, and [3]. In the latter regard, lands under BLM, USFS, USBR, IDFG and City jurisdiction would remain undeveloped.
- Areas shown as **Open Space Via Development Patterns** would also likely be ultimately characterized by a high percentage of open space due to the very low base density assigned overall and provision of significant density bonuses for clustering development and preserving large proportions of open space in buildable areas (i.e. <25% slope).

Other key open space-related policies and provisions in the Foothills Policy Plan include:

- All open space credited for density bonus purposes would remain in a primarily natural condition with the goal to maintain it for wildlife habitat and recreational uses. Several options exist for the status of this open space, including: remaining private, dedication to the public (e.g. city or county), conservation easements, etc.
- In addition to prohibiting development on slopes of 25% grade or greater, development could not occur within designated floodways and should be clustered to avoid/minimize impact to environmental and wildlife features, such as wetlands, threatened plant species, riparian areas, big game winter range, and sensitive wildlife habitats.
- Highest priority for direct public acquisition of open space is assigned to the eastern portion of planning area, generally east of 8th Street.

City of Eagle: *Comprehensive Plan, North Eagle Foothills Planning Area* (December, 2007)

Eagle's North Foothills Planning Area covers approximately 49,000 acres encompassing the Ada County foothills north of the City's AOI, between State Highways 16 and 55 to the county line, and Spring Valley Ranch lands further north in Gem and Boise Counties.

A major city goal for this planning area is establishment of a regional open space network to preserve environmentally sensitive areas and connections between them, and formalize existing recreational uses. The City's objective is to work with private landowners to achieve a minimum of 40% open space within the private land component of the Foothills Planning Area[1], with natural open space being the highest priority for preservation. This natural open space objective is focused on lands with slopes of 25% or greater, floodways, important habitat areas, special features and scenic viewpoints. Methods for achieving the objective include creative design, voluntary dedications, incentives and governmental acquisition or exchange.

Within the Ada County portion of its Foothills Planning Area, the City's comprehensive plan map includes a **Regional Open Space Overlay** (shown on Figure 3-1), illustrating those lands where "clustering and conservation development" and transfer of density to less sensitive areas should be used to preserve "as much open space as possible, providing for habitat and creating a regional open space network." Lands within this overlay contain a high proportion of steep terrain and important habitat, as well as the most important features (such as Rocky Canyon West) and scenic viewpoints.

The City's plan also includes a desired recreational trail system, including regional connections. The core network of the trail system is illustrated on Figure 3-1 (the City's system also includes a second "tier" of local loop trails). This trail system is intended to accommodate continuation of existing non-motorized recreational activities, especially equestrian.

Other illustrative objectives and policies of Eagle's foothills plan include:

- Achieve a development pattern characterized as a series of hamlets/activity centers separated by larger natural areas and open spaces, with the hamlets/activity centers developed according to a transect plan (i.e. central, urban-type densities transitioning outward through progressively lower densities into permanent open space areas.
- Minimize fragmentation of open space areas so that resource areas are managed and viewed as an integrated network.
- Manage BLM lands for the general use and enjoyment of the public. Work with the BLM to leverage the exchange of discontinuous tracts of public land for equal or larger tracts of contiguous ownership within the regional open space overlay that will build onto the existing public ownerships.
- Provide density bonuses to developers for provision and long term maintenance of open space beyond a 20% required minimum, and protection of environmentally sensitive areas and unique features. Presumably, given the 20% minimum open space requirement, the City expects that density bonuses will provide the incentive necessary for landowners to participate in achieving the above-noted 40% open space objective (in context with a blanket assigned density on private land of 1 dwelling unit per 2 acres over the entire planning area, regardless of terrain or resource conditions).

3.3 Boise River

The City of Boise's adopted Boise River System Ordinance requires:

- maintaining capacity of the flood way,
- protecting Water Quality,
- preserving and promoting recreational values within the river corridor, and

[1] 89% of the planning area is privately owned; the remaining 11% (5400 acres) is in public/BLM ownership and also would remain in open space.

- providing habitat protection and enhancement for wintering bald eagles, heron, and rainbow trout.

The idea for a Boise River Greenbelt originated in 1962 and was officially adopted in 1964 as part of the Boise City Comprehensive Plan. In 1971, Ordinance No. 3240 established a 50' Boise River Greenbelt setback of 50'. Around 1982, the City adopted a Boise River System Management District (overlay zone). This ordinance increased the Greenbelt setback to 70' and provided guidelines for uses within and adjacent to the Greenbelt setback area (recreation, flood way protection, water quality and habitat protection). The 1982 ordinance update process was supported by a City commissioned study of the river corridor. The report included descriptions and mapping of Boise River Corridor habitat values. Major changes to the 1982 ordinance included protections for riparian areas immediately adjacent to the river; setbacks pertaining to wintering bald eagles and heron rookeries, as well as standards and guidelines concerning the values to be considered for project designs in areas adjacent to river setbacks.

The other cities along the river (Garden City, Eagle, Star) recognize the many values of the river corridor, including open space and recreation. The comprehensive plans of each city contain objectives and policies regarding the river corridor and the greenbelt. However, there is no consistent set of objectives, policies or standards common to all involved jurisdictions. The County's recent Comprehensive Plan update and draft Parks, Open Space and Trails Plan is the most current forum for discussion of the county-wide Boise River Corridor.

3.4 Specific Open Space and Trail Priorities from County & City Plans

Tables 3-1 and 3-2 list the resource- and location-specific open space and recreation priorities identified in county and city plans to date. As a whole, these listings are relevant to Task Force efforts to fulfill the three major focuses of County attention and responsibility noted above: large, interconnected reserves of natural open space, regional parks, and a countywide, interconnected trail system.

In the case of the County, the source of these priorities is the latest comprehensive plan, including the Parks, Trails and Open Space Plan, and related historic preservation work. For the cities, the source is the relevant city comprehensive plans. In the latter regard, the summary listings contained on Tables 3-1 and 3-2 focus only on city statements regarding desired trail or open space connections to unincorporated lands or other municipalities outside their boundaries, and open space/recreational resources of key importance to city residents but outside of city jurisdiction. City priorities within their corporate or AOI boundaries are not included.

Table 3-1
Natural & Cultural Resource Protection/Conservation Priorities From Existing County & City Plans

Resource Priority:	Cited In Plans Of:
Points/Areas of Geologic, Scenic Interest	
- Rocky Canyon (west)	County, Eagle
- Rocky Canyon (east)	County
- Table Rock	County
- Prospect Peak	Eagle
- Stack Rock	County, Eagle
- Kuna Cave	Kuna
- Kuna Butte	County, Kuna
Significant Water Bodies	
- Lucky Peak Lake	County
- Hubbard Reseroir	County
- Indian Creek Reservoir	County
Rivers & Streams (floodways, floodplains, riparian & wetland habitats)	
- Boise River	County, Boise, Eagle, Garden City
- Dry Creek	County, Eagle
- Fivemile Creek	County, Boise, Meridian
- Ninemile Creek	County, Boise, Meridian
- Tenmile Creek	County, Boise, Meridian
- Indian Creek	County. Kuna
- Bear Creek	Meridian
- Finch Creek	County
- Blacks Creek	County
- Settlers Canal	Boise, Meridian
- Snake River	County, Kuna
Wildlife Habitat--Specific Resources & Locations	
- Boise River Black Cottonwood Forest	County, Star
- Fivemile & Victory Wetlands	County
- Southwest Boise Wetlands Management Area	County
- Snake River Canyon Wildlife Area	County
- Birds of Prey National Conservation Area	County, Kuna
- Foothills big game winter range	County, Boise, Eagle
- Foothills resident deer and raptor habitat	Eagle
- Protected/special status/rare species locations	All
Historic Resources	
Roads and Trails	
- Oregon Trail remnants	County
- Goodale's Cutoff	Eagle
- Silver City Road	County
- Idaho City Toll Road	County
- Valley Loop Trolley Line	County
- Bayse Lumber Haul Road	Eagle
Irrigation Works	
- Diversion Dam	County, Boise
- Barber Dam	County, Boise
- Farmers Union Canal	Eagle
- Ridenbaugh Canal	Boise, Meridian
- Thurman-Mill Canal	Boise, Garden City
- Other historic canals	County
National Register Sites (all existing & eligible)	All

Table 3-2
Regional Parks/Recreation & Trail/Linear Park Priorities From Existing County & City Plans

Recreation Priority:	Cited In Plans Of:
Regional Parks/Recreation Areas	
Regional Parks (north to south)	
- Rocky Canyon (west)	County
- Eagle Foothills	Eagle
- Seaman's Gulch/Hidden Hollow Landfill	County
- Eagle Island State Park (further improvement program)	County
- Rocky Canyon (east)	County
- Lucky Peak Reservoir (expansion-marina and campground)	County
- Hubbard Reservoir	County
- Swan Falls (new regional park)	County, Kuna
Special Use Areas/Facilities	
- Blacks Creek--Shooting facility	County
Trails, Corridors, Linear Open Space	
General	
- Foothills: Boise/Central Trail System	County, Boise
- Foothills: Eagle/North Trail System	County, Eagle
- Boise River Greenway (completion/expansion)	County, Boise, Eagle, Garden City
- Eagle Island	Eagle
- Southeast County Trail System	County
- Southwest County Trail System	County
- Snake River Corridor Greenway and Trail System	County, Kuna
- Other Stream corridors (see above)	County, Kuna, Meridian
- Irrigation canal corridors	County, most cities
- Historic trails	County, Eagle
Specific	
- Montour WMA Trail	Eagle
- Eagle – Stack Rock Trail	County. Eagle
- Boise River to Foothills Trail	Eagle
- Oregon Trail/Bonneville Point Loop	County
- Lucky Peak ReservoirTrail System (perimeter, loop)	County
- Eckert Road Pathway	County
- State Street/Eagle Road Corridor	Eagle
- Meridian Loop	Meridian
- Gas pipeline ROW	Meridian
- Railroad corridor	Meridian
- Eightmile pathway	Meridian
- South Slough pathway	Meridian
- Boise Valley Rail with Trail	Meridian
- Highway 69 Historic Byway	Kuna

4. Mapping Open Space Opportunities & Priorities

4.1 Introduction

Using available information, the Task Force prepared mapping to assess natural resource, land use, recreation and land ownership conditions in the currently undeveloped areas of the County. Emphasis was placed on characteristics and criteria most relevant to identifying areas and sites on which conservation and open space preservation priority (as defined in Chapter 3) should be focused.

4.2 Resources (Natural Resource Conditions)

From the standpoint of natural resource conditions, the Task Force began with land characteristics that represent constraints or hazards to development. Lands with such constraints and/or hazards are often de facto candidates for open space. Factors mapped in this category included:

- Slope gradients at or above 25%
- Highly erodible soils
- Flood hazard areas (floodways and floodplains)

In addition to these fundamental conditions, a high priority is placed by both the public and Task Force members on conservation and preservation of wildlife, water, scenic and cultural resources and unique geologic or geothermal features. Resource characteristics mapped to portray these values were:

- Vegetation communities
  - Shrubland (e.g., sage scrub)
  - Juniper
  - Forested
  - Rocky outcrop
  - Natural grassland
  - Non-native annual grassland
- Big game use (i.e. deer and elk)
- Special status species
- Water bodies, rivers and streams (including the Boise and Snake Rivers and Lucky Peak, Blacks Creek, Indian Creek, and Hubbard reservoirs)
- Special features (including Rocky Canyon West north of Eagle, Stack Rock, Table Rock, and Kuna Butte)
- Roads (road density was used as a measure of relative disturbance to/impact on habitat and open space values; high road density generally means more impact and less value)

Scenic and cultural resources are not represented on the above list. Scenic resources have not be mapped for most of the County; such mapping will need to be part of future efforts. Cultural resources are predominantly site-specific (point resources), not influencing broad areas in terms of conservation priority mapping.

4.3 Uses (Relevant Land Use, Recreation and Land Status Conditions)

Conditions mapped in this category were:

- Existing and proposed trails and trail systems

- Existing and proposed state, regional and other significant parks (including proposed Eagle, Hidden Hollow, Blacks Creek, Indian Creek, and Hubbard regional park sites, the Eagle velodrome, recreation sites/parks along the Boise and Snake Rivers, and key locations outside the County—such as Stack Rock, Emmett ATV park and BLM recreation sites)
- Other significant recreation destination points (e.g. special features such as those listed above)
- Land ownership
- Special public land designations
  - National Conservation Areas
  - Military training areas
  - Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC—a BLM designation)
- State Wildlife Management Areas

4.4 Composite Analysis

Using the two categories of relevant information described above, the Task Force conducted map analysis to identify lands with priority for conservation and open space preservation and begin to define the elements and area relationships important for creating the kind of county-wide trail/connectivity system that is highly desired by county residents.

The analysis began with a standard overlay process in a geographic information (GIS) system. The overlay process provides a view of lands where important or valuable natural resource, land use, recreation and/or ownership conditions overlap and concentrate. The general assumption in such analysis is that priority for conservation/preservation emphasis increases with the number of valuable resources and/or conditions present in any given area.

To accomplish the analysis, the Task Force assigned a numeric value to each resource condition (if applicable), as listed in Sections 4.2 and 4.3; in areas where conditions overlap, their numeric values are simply summed to provide a resource "score". One method of performing this analysis is simply to assign a value of 1 to each resource/use/status condition (i.e. saying essentially that each resource condition is equal in importance or value). Initial Task Force overlay analysis used the equal-value approach; however, most Task Force members expressed the belief that some conditions are more important than others in determining relative conservation/preservation priority. Following through on this belief, the Task Force developed and used the resource scorings shown on Table 4-1 to prepare conservation and open space preservation values mapping. This mapping is illustrated on the Conceptual Conservation and Open Space Preservation Priorities Overlay presented and discussed in Section 5.2 (Figure 5-1).

Next, the Task Force aimed the mapping effort at exploring potential for a county-wide trail/connectivity system by simply overlaying the following data on one map (no scoring or ranking system was necessary or appropriate in this case):

- Existing trails/trail systems
- Proposed trails/trail systems
- Major needed/desirable connection corridors as identified by Task Force members

This mapping served as the basis for the Conceptual County-Wide Trail System Map presented in Section 5.3 (Figure 5-2).

Table 4-1: Criteria and Relative Importance Scores Used in Conservation and Open Space Values Mapping

Constraints/Hazards	Condition	Assigned Score
- Slope gradient	>25%	5
	<25%	0
- Highly erodible soils	Present	3
	Absent	0
- Flood Hazard	Present	5
	Absent	0
Resource Values	**Condition**	**Assigned Score**
- Vegetation Community	Shrubland	3
	Juniper	3
	Forested	3
	Rocky outcrop	3
	Natural grassland	3
	Non-native annual grassland	1
- Big game use	High	5
	Moderate	3
	Low	1
- Special status species	Type 1	5
	Type 2	3
	Type 3 & 4	1
- Major Water bodies	*(part of base mapping; fundamental to open space system; no rating necessary)*	
- Special features	Present	10
Land Use/Land Status	**Condition**	**Assigned Score**
- Existing & proposed state & regional parks	Present	10
- National Conservation Area	Present	10
- State Wildlife Management Area	Present	10
- ACEC	Present	2
- Road density	Highest*	-5
	Lowest	0
- Public lands	*(part of base mapping; retention and management of public land values is funadamental to open space planning)*	

*A proportional range of values was used for this condition; values from 0 to -5 were assigned based on relative road density compared with all existing open lands in the county.

5. A Blueprint For County-Wide Conservation, Open Space and Recreation

5.1 Introduction

Imagine large, inter-connected nature preserves in the **Foothills** from north of Star to Lucky Peak Reservoir, with hiking, equestrian and bicycle trails connecting people with the outdoors and providing habitat for wildlife.

Imagine a ribbon of wild lands, wetlands, parks and preserves along the entire **Boise River**, with continuous pathways connecting communities and providing access to the river for fishing, floating, and family enjoyment.

Imagine Hubbard, Swan Falls, Blacks Creek, Indian Creek and Lucky Peak **Reservoirs as jewels in the desert**. Linked by corridors of creeks, waterways and trails, these are outdoor oases providing wildlife habitat and recreation in a growing part of the county.

Imagine the **Snake River Canyon and Birds of Prey National Conservation Area** protecting world-renowned raptor habitat, providing refuge for natural desert wildlife and vegetation, and being accessible for compatible recreation opportunities via a system of well managed roads and trails.

Imagine all the communities of Ada County connected together and linked with these open space resources by a network of trails, greenways and parks.

These are the things that citizens around the valley find important to our present and future quality of life. These visions of a desired future related to conservation, open space and recreation have been brewing for many years with the pieces and parts residing in plans and in people's imaginations.

This chapter brings together the expressions of past plans and public outreach (Chapter 3) with the analysis of current natural resources and land use patterns in the County (Chapter 4). It presents Task Force findings and recommendations regarding what a future County-wide Conservation, Open Space and Recreation System would look like—how and where the visions described above can be made a reality.

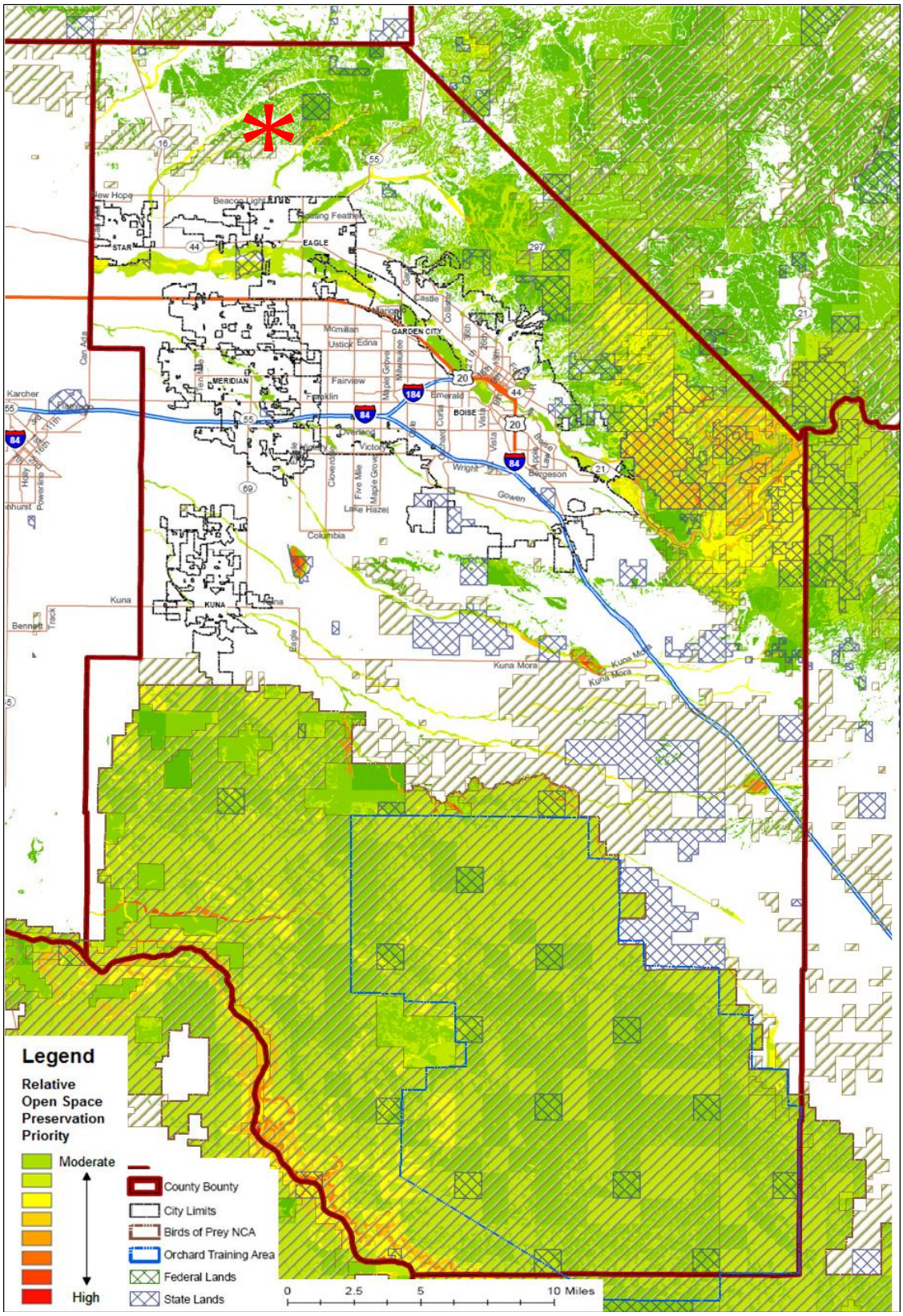
5.2 Wide-Angle View—County-Wide Conservation and Open Space Preservation Patterns

Task Force "work in progress" analysis of the land and natural resources of the County, using public conservation/open space values and priorities as the primary "filter", is presented on the map shown as Figure 5-1, "Conceptual Conservation and Open Space Preservation Priorities Overlay" (Overlay). This map illustrates lands throughout the county on which conservation and open space preservation should be a priority over the long term (colored areas)and how these lands relate with existing land ownership patterns.

On the conceptual Overlay, areas shown in color as priority for conservation and open space preservation (with moderate to high ratings, per the analysis described in Section 4.3) are characterized by a combination of:

- Natural constraints to development, especially high slope gradients, floodways, floodplains, and highly erodible soils (i.e. areas that will likely remain largely in open space due to significant limitations on their development potential),

Figure 5-1: Conceptual Conservation & Open Space Priorities Overlay



*Note: For the North Foothills, refer to Figure 3-1. The Regional Open Space Overlay developed as part of the 2007 Eagle Comprehensive Plan would supersede the mapping shown on this figure. Combined with Task Force recommendations in this report , the Eagle Overlay with its associated policies regarding clustering, density transfer, etc. represents an example of the desired open space priority/planning end product (see Section 5.2 narrative).

- Areas that are already preserved as habitat or open space, including existing state and regional parks, wildlife management areas, lands acquired for open space purposes by city or county government, public facilities that have or will have open values (e.g. the county landfill area), and the federal NCA (National Conservation Area), and
- Public priorities for resource conservation and open space preservation, particularly important wildlife habitat, stream corridors, special places (such as unique geologic features and cultural resources sites/corridors), and other areas specified in existing city or county plans as important for future open space or recreation.

Notes and Recommendations Associated with the Conceptual Overlay:

- This mapping, in its final form, is intended as a complement to relevant county and city comprehensive plans and to serve as guidance to involved federal, state, and local government entities, and private landowners in making future land use decisions. It is not expected that either [1] development would be precluded entirely from within this Overlay or [2] no valuable open space can be achieved or should be sought outside of the Overlay boundary.
- The Overlay concept is a way of beginning to prioritize places important to the citizens of Ada County so that we can focus resources and efforts on those places which carry the highest value. For example, those areas rated "highest" on the Overlay should receive the highest priority for acquisition.
- Just because a parcel may be outside of the Overlay boundary does not suggest it has no conservation or recreation value; as planning and development evolve in the County, valuable open space and recreation resources may be realized outside of the Overlay.
- A substantial proportion of the land within the Overlay is privately owned, and some development will likely occur within these areas. When development occurs in these areas, it should be guided by clear strategies, policies and requirements (consistent across all jurisdictions) that will result in a high proportion of the land preserved in open space. Techniques available to achieve this objective include outright purchase, trades, and voluntary and/or regulatory approaches as part of the development process (as described in greater detail in Chapter 6).
- Related to the above, it should be noted that not all resource conservation and open space lands need to be in public ownership. There is a strong desire reflected in the Overlay to preserve valuable wildlife habitat, scenic and other resources in their own right. Valuable habitat and other open space values can be protected as part of long-term private ownership patterns, through such techniques as conservation subdivisions and conservation easements.
- There are substantial tracts of state endowment and federal BLM lands within the Overlay. As discussed in Chapter 2, both of these categories of public land ownership, county-wide, are subject to changes in their current status as open space and/or recreation lands (through development or land disposal/exchange actions by the respective managing agencies). Within the Overlay, a high priority should be placed on the ideal of a achieving a net increase in public land ownership—dedicated to open space values—through land exchanges, acquisitions by local agencies, or other available mechanisms. At a minimum, there should be no net loss of existing open space values represented by these lands within the Overlay.
- There are a number of locations in the county where isolated tracts of BLM land exist outside of the Overlay. As appropriate, these tracts should be considered for exchange with private landowners or the IDL (state endowment lands) within the Overlay, in order to achieve a net gain in public open space.

- Planning for and management of the open space system envisioned by the Overlay and described throughout this chapter will require a careful balancing act between long-term resource protection/sustainability and provision of access and recreation. The high concentration of valued resources, landscapes, and special places in most areas included within the Overlay, combined with proximity to our communities, creates a correspondingly high demand for recreational access. However, unmanaged access and usage by people, pets, and machines can damage, the resources that draw us to these lands. Task Force members are unanimous in the conviction that recreation plans and other use decisions within the county open space system must achieve, not threaten, long term resource sustainability (i.e., wildlife habitat, water supply and quality, visual quality, cultural resources, etc---the reasons for assigning preservation priority in the first place).
- The open space resources on which the Task Force effort is focused attract many different, sometimes conflicting, user groups, including hikers, bicyclists, equestrians, dog trainers, people walking their pets, and others. Disputes can arise among these groups regarding which have the more legitimate claim on limited resources. Within the limits of long-term sustainability/carrying capacity, all user groups should be accommodated.
- The work shown on Figure 5-1 is a work in progress, for the following reasons:
  - The best resource data available to the Task Force has been used for this mapping and the results shown on Figure 5-1 represent a first round of prioritization/relative importance analysis. However, further work is needed to verify results, iterate and test the priority/value scoring system, and add resources (e.g. visual sensitivity) that have not been mapped to date. Thus, the information and results mapped herein provide a good initial view of a desired county-wide Open Space Overlay, but this work warrants further review, verification and refinement.
  - The Task Force effort has not included a public outreach/involvement dimension. While every effort has been made to reflect public values and priorities, as expressed in prior planning efforts, a key part of next steps in this process should be consultation with the public and with involved agencies, organizations and landowners.
  - The mapping effort reflected on Figure 5-1 begins to, but does not fully complete a response to public priority for creating large, contiguous areas to support wildlife populations, providing inter-connected trail networks and outdoor recreation opportunities and providing close-in opportunities to view and appreciate these resources. More work is needed to help define how this objective will be achieved. The process through which Eagle developed its Regional Open Space Overlay (as referenced on Figure 5-1 and discussed in Section 3.3) represents the type, scope and depth of effort needed.
  - Many challenges must be addressed related to long-term management and use of the open space resources preserved in the county-wide system envisioned by the Overlay and associated recommendations contained in this report. Central among these are sustainability v. use demand and accommodating multiple, sometimes conflicting (but all legitimate and important) user groups—as discussed above.

5.3 Framework Elements For a County-Wide Conservation & Open Space System

Within the overall county-wide open space pattern shown on Figure 5-1, a framework can be described to better understand, plan for and implement a comprehensive vision for conservation and open space in Ada County. This framework is composed of the following elements:

- The Foothills
- The Boise River
- South County
- Snake River Canyon and Birds of Prey National Conservation Area
- Stitching It All Together—A County-Wide Trail System

THE FOOTHILLS

The most visually stunning feature apparent to those who fly into Boise or see marketing pamphlets about the Treasure Valley is the foothills. The conservation and recreation values of the foothills are many and have been emphasized strongly in all public forums dealing with quality of life, open space and recreation in the County.

The foothills provide a dramatic scenic backdrop to communities and farmland of the entire Valley, as well as many viewpoints from which to look out over those communities and farmlands. Habitat values include critical winter range for deer and elk and a unique blending of mid-elevation sagebrush-steppe and grassland environments rising to ponderosa pine forest on the ridges. Several hundred varieties of mammals and birds are found throughout the foothills. Some, such as neo tropical song birds and bald eagles, travel here on their annual migration while others call the foothills home year-round. Unique geologic formations, historic trail remnants, and lush stream- and spring-fed riparian corridors can also be found.

Valley residents have long enjoyed the foothills as a major outdoor recreation resource, in many instances due to the kindness and approval of the ranching families who own large portions of the land. A variety of outdoor activities including horseback riding, hiking, bicycling, dog training and the simple enjoyment of open landscapes, wildlife and vegetation have a long history here.

Efforts to preserve open space and provide recreation in the foothills have been on-going for many years. The Boise Foothills Serial Levy in 2001 was a watershed event for local land conservation. Voters overwhelmingly supported taxing themselves to acquire open space. The results of the Levy have been successful helping to conserve 3198 acres of private land and in funding a multi-agency land exchange package which will result in 5000 acres of conservation land. The 100 mile Ridge to Rivers trail system has become the envy of the country garnering attention and media coverage.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Along with the Boise River corridor, the foothills of Ada County, from the County boundary north of Star to south of Lucky Peak Reservoir, are consistently identified by the public as the highest priority overall for large-scale open space preservation. This priority is due to the unique combination of resources (vegetation, wildlife, scenic resources, and special places) and the outdoor recreation opportunities associated with these resource, all of which result in the large-scale pattern of desired open space preservation reflected on Figure 5-1.
- Much of the land in the foothills north of Boise, Eagle and Star is privately owned, and interest in development of residential neighborhoods and planned communities is high. While this trend can put at risk natural open space and associated recreation it also can be the avenue for creating an open space system, using open space dedication requirements, conservation-oriented development patterns and stewardship funding mechanisms to improve habitat and provide recreation.
- Ada County, Boise, and Eagle have each prepared comprehensive plans addressing the foothills. The County Comprehensive plan addresses all foothills areas in a general, policy-

oriented manner, without specific land use or open space plan maps. The Boise and Eagle plans address the foothills outside of their respective AOIs, as shown in Section 3.3. Each of these plans recognizes the natural resource, open space and recreation values of the foothills and contains objectives and policies to promote associated preservation. However, each also takes a different approach, especially related to the proportion of land that would be preserved as open space as development occurs. The County's draft Parks, Open Space and Trails Plan suggests a minimum of 30% open space in foothills planned communities; the Eagle plan for the North Foothills contains a minimum dedication requirement of 20% of the land; Boise's plan for the east/Boise foothills would result in substantially over 50% of the land being retained in open space (in a combination of private and public ownership). National trends for planned communities in sensitive areas such the foothills suggest that the Boise approach is closest to the emerging standard (per the Sonoran Institute [http://sonoran.org/] during workshop discussions in Boise, 2007).

- The County landfill's 2,710 acres of relatively undisturbed, rolling, sagebrush-steppe landscape provides habitat for native vegetation, including two sensitive plant species, and a wide variety of animals, up to and including Rocky Mountain elk. Prior to closure in 2100±, approximately 700 acres will be used for landfill purposes, then reclaimed. There are now 197 acres dedicated to open space in the Seaman's Gulch trail complex. Another 220± acres on the west side of the landfill property are dedicated to Eagle City Park and Velodrome trails. Overall, the County intends to manage the ~2000 acres of land around the core landfill operating areas for conservation and open space purposes. This land provides a large island of undeveloped open space and wildlife habitat, with opportunities for environmental studies and education, in an area which is seeing increased development activity.
- Isolated tracts of state endowment and BLM lands, ranging in size from 40 to several thousand acres, occur within a broad pattern of private ownership in the central and north foothills, especially in the area north of Eagle. At present, these lands are part of the open space and recreation resource in the foothills (informal in the case of the state endowment lands). However, as discussed earlier, IDL's mandate to generate income from state endowment lands and BLM's upcoming review of whether or not to retain small, isolated tracts in federal ownership make the future status of the tracts uncertain.
- The challenges of achieving sustainability in light of high demand for access and useand accommodating multiple user groups are particularly significant in the foothills.
- Several, highly valued, location-specific resources exist in the foothills, some in public ownership and some in private ownership. These include Rocky Canyon West north of Eagle (currently in BLM ownership), Goodale's Cutoff (a part of the Oregon Trail which traverses both BLM and private ownership north of Eagle), Castle Rock, Table Rock, and others.

Recommendations:

- Develop and apply a consistent plan and set of open space preservation and recreation standards governing the private lands in the foothills county-wide. With participation and ultimate approval of all involved local jurisdictions, this plan and associated standards should reconcile the differences currently evident in County and city plans, and should achieve a high percentage (>50%) of open space preservation in the areas shown within the Overlay.
- Achieve a net gain, at minimum no net loss, of the open space values represented by tracts of BLM lands within the foothills. In the BLM's upcoming Resource Management Plan process, the County and cities should work with BLM to accomplish this objective through land exchanges, ownership consolidations, local acquisition of isolated tracts or other means. Where isolated BLM tracts occur outside of the Overlay, these can be considered for

exchange with private owners or with IDL to consolidate and increase public land ownership within the Overlay area. Also, if tracts within the Overlay are proposed for disposal by BLM, the County or cities should consider acquiring these lands (in the same manner that Eagle is currently pursuing acquisition of approximately 2000 acres of BLM land in the north foothills).

- Achieve no net loss of the open space values currently represented by undeveloped State endowment lands within the Overlay area. Land exchanges are a primary mechanism for achieving this objective (e.g., exchange of State endowment lands within the Overlay for BLM lands slated for disposal outside the Overlay).
- Manage resources and recreation in the foothills to balance uses and protect the natural resource values. Restrictions on recreational access in some areas (either overall or seasonally) will likely be necessary. Motor vehicle access in the foothills open space system should be restricted to established roads and designated vehicle trails . In order to help mitigate conflicts between/among user groups, options will need to be explored, such as different priorities in different areas (e.g. equestrian emphasis in the north foothills, pedestrian and bicycle emphasis in the central/east foothills), distinct/separate trail facilities in some areas, etc. It is likely that there is no "one size fits all" solution to these challenges in all areas of the foothills; a creative combination of solutions will be necessary.
- On a location-specific scale, the highest priority should be assigned to preservation of the following resources, sites and special features in the foothills (including retention in public ownership if applicable, dedication through the development process, or purchase from private owners using public funds if available and feasible):
  - Big game critical winter range.
  - Prime riparian corridors (e.g. Dry Creek, Willow Creek)
  - Prime sage-grass-steppe habitat
  - Eagle-designated open space overlay in north foothills
  - The ~2,000 acres surrounding the operating areas of the County landfill
  - Rocky Canyon West (north of Eagle)—with consideration of potential for a regional open space preserve
  - Dry Creek corridor overall and upper Dry Creek watershed
  - Goodale's Cutoff (historic Oregon Trail route), including development of appropriate public trail opportunities
  - Hillside to the Hollow
  - Corridor from Seaman's Gulch to Polecat Gulch to Bogus Basin Road.

THE BOISE RIVER

The one defining natural feature that ties valley communities together is the Boise River. Native Americans caught fish and lived along the banks until overtaken by white settlers in the 1800's. Settlements along the river grew into today's cities.

The Boise was once a "vagrant river" that ran miles wide in flood stage. Accordingly, white settlers sited Boise Avenue, Chinden Road, and Highway 44 outside the springtime reach of the mighty river. In the 20th century, large dams sufficiently tamed the Boise so it is now contained in a narrow channel with minimal flood plain.

Modern society demands more than a working river. In the 1960's, the idea of a Boise River Greenbelt started modestly and with some level of opposition. Today, the Greenbelt is one of our

crown jewels, featured in media and marketing materials and is something enjoyed by residents of the entire County.

While most agree a corridor of natural open space and pathways and parks is good for the community, we must find additional ways to assure that the Boise River remains the backbone to a conservation and recreation system tying our communities together.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Flooding and the future of the River corridor - Experts suggest that continued development in the flood plain are increasing the risk of catastrophic damage from high water events, with a corresponding increase in the need to consider a concrete lined river to mitigate this risk. However, past surveys indicate that most citizens support preservation of open space in the floodplain, recognizing (among other values) that natural open space can help reduce damage from high water events, providing a buffer to adjacent development. Unique designs, incentives to create additional setbacks and other ordinances may be needed to assure that enough room is given to the river while balancing the needs of private landowners
- Fragmentation of habitat - Developments can fragment important wildlife habitat one small project at a time. By finding ways to establish consistent open space designs and management strategies, developments can play a role in helping improve habitat and recreation opportunities.
- Water quality - There are increasing efforts to clean up the Lower Boise River and reduce pollution and sedimentation. Wetlands and natural open spaces can help to create a river with clean water.
- Public River Access – The Boise River is a highly valued, public trust asset, but the public's access to its river is often limited. Additional signed public access points need to be established, a continuous water trail designated, and public land retained and created for accessing and viewing the river.
- Continuous pathway - As private land is developed, many communities have worked to assure a continuous pathway is created along the river. Consistent development ordinances are needed so this effort will continue and the goal of a continuous pathway through the entire valley can be realized. The community and economic values of such a continuous path are tremendous.
- Despite hydrologic, environmental, and recreational reasons for preserving Boise River riparian habitats, Boise River riparian woodlands are disappearing because landowners have few economic incentives to protect them. While standing cottonwood forests are protected by various ordinances and regulations, stands can be cleared by logging, then 30± feet of gravel profitably extracted, and the land subsequently developed for waterfront homes.
- The Barber Pool Conservation Area (BPCA) and Barber Park are the two (2) largest protected cottonwood gallery forests on the river. While only small remnants of the cottonwood forests that once occupied Boise River banks, they provide important habitat for native flora and fauna up to and including Rocky mountain elk. Public access is restricted in the 400+ acre BPCA. While tree-nesting birds (wood ducks, owls, flickers, etc.) are abundant in the approximately one-half of Barber Park's 68± acres which is old-growth, gallery forest, mammals and ground nesting birds are severely impacted by off-trail humans and loose running dogs.
- The same types of sustainability and user group accommodation challenges as those described overall and for the foothills apply to the river corridor.

Recommendations:

- Establish and protect open space and connectivity along and access to the river.
- Create a Boise River System Ordinance that is consistent within each jurisdiction along the entire Boise River in Ada County. A key emphasis of this ordinance should be on open space and habitat preservation and provision of recreational opportunities.
- Seek funding for purchase of land or development rights in the floodplain. Utilize public/private partnerships for acquisition from willing landowners.
- Manage public land along Oregon Trail and Boise River to provide permanent open space, historic interpretation, and public access and vistas.
- Protect riverside cottonwood forests and floodplains through economic incentives, purchases, and/or regulation.
- Achieve a strong open space and conservation component as part of the upcoming Boise River Corridor Study to be undertaken by the Army Corps of Engineers.
- Ensure long-term sustainability of natural resources where river corridor open space is focused in such resources; and within sustainability limits, accommodate multiple (non-motorized) user groups.
- Require development applications along the river to illustrate how open space lands will be owned and managed to assure long-term conservation and recreation goals are achieved.
- With public input, create a comprehensive Open Space and Habitat Management Plan for Barber Park's wild areas, with environmental emphasis, signage, habitat improvements, educational and scientific goals, and use restrictions, consistent with Ada County and Boise River System Ordinances.
- Extend the Boise River Greenbelt and connections east into Boise County, west into Canyon County, laterally into developing communities, and along the Oregon Trail to Bonneville Point, incorporating loop, scenic, and interpretative opportunities, with public and private partners.
- Specific, priority action/project recommendations:
    - Fund deferred maintenance of the Greenbelt Path.
    - Complete a recreational path along the Boise River to the County line.
    - Develop:
        - Boise River Water Trail connecting to Canyon County.
        - Trailhead and path on the Oregon Trail from Highway 21 to Bonneville Point.
        - Riverside path from Highway 21 to Lucky Peak on south bank.
        - Loop path along north rim of Black Cliffs through the Cliffs Planned Community to provide connectivity to other public trails.
        - Loop path along south rim of Black Cliffs on public land.

SOUTH COUNTY

Another visually stunning feature of Ada County is the vast expanse of open farmland and sagebrush (desert) south of Boise. Tens of thousands of acres of farms and private acreages provide an abundance of private open space. Even more thousands of acres of state- and BLM-owned sagebrush surrounding Ada County farms and cities provide an abundance of open space.

Over 400 miles of irrigation delivery canals and wastewater drains course across cities, farms and acreages, providing water amenities during the April through September irrigation season.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Ada County farmland is a use being displaced by urban development. This potential for open space disappears unless protections are applied, generally through open space dedications in the development process.
- Ada County's population center is moving south and west toward Kuna. Several planned communities and other large developments are being proposed in this area. These developments must provide adequate public open space and public trails.
- The gently rolling topography south of I-84 and west of Cole Road is almost completely private land. The Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area to the south is the largest block of public land in Ada County and provides outstanding outdoor recreation and wildlife viewing opportunities.
- The best prospects for large open space areas and public trails in the Kuna-Meridian-Boise triangle are: private canals, creeks and drains, Ada County's Hubbard Recreation Area, Kuna Butte, Initial Point, land administered by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and BLM, and Indian, Ten Mile, and Mason Creeks as they are developed. Many of these projects will require partnering with land owners as development occurs.
    - Private canals, creeks and drains: Privately owned irrigation and drainage easements or rights of way are actual and potential non-motorized community linkages. The public is generally excluded from these easements/rights of way on private land. However, as parcels are developed for housing, public trails are typically established along these corridors. Thus, development generally increases public trails on irrigation and drainage facilities. Idaho Code 42-1209 requires written approval of the irrigation entity to construct paths within canal rights of ways; in cases where the conveyance corridor is a easement, the approval of underlying landowners is also required. Nonetheless, these channels, especially including major canals such as the Ridenbaugh, Mora, and Rawson, have great potential to provide community connectivity.
    - Hubbard Recreation Area: This 377 acre property has great potential to provide permanent public open space, wildlife habitat, and trails when Ada County obtains title from the State of Idaho. It contains the largest wetland between the Boise and Snake Rivers and the largest block of relatively natural habitat between the Boise Foothills and Kuna Butte. The property has great potential to provide several miles of trails, natural areas, and wetlands close to the three cities that are growing together at this location.
    - Blacks Creek Reservoir: Blacks Creek Reservoir could provide public recreation and open space, contingent upon compatibility with BLM permitted livestock grazing and private reservoir operations.
    - Isolated BLM parcels: Several thousand acres of BLM land south and east of Kuna is now public open space. Some of it is accessible by the public while other parcels are surrounded by private land. Much of this land could be disposed of (sold, exchanged, or made available for community uses) by BLM. The BLM will likely retain land occupied by sensitive plant species and/or having other public values. These federal lands have the potential of providing significant open space conservation, via cooperative management agreements, Recreation and Public Purposes Act or through land exchanges that increase the regional open space values of Ada County (See: Public Lands, Section 6.3.3).

- Bureau of Reclamation land: If not used for irrigation purposes, federal policy calls for it to be returned to BLM administration, sold to repay irrigation debt, or transferred to irrigation districts. The City of Kuna is planning a 30± acre park on Reclamation land at Meridian Road and Indian Creek.
- Indian, Ten Mile, and Mason Creeks: Now in private ownership with no public access, developers are likely to provide public trails along these natural streams apace with urban development.

Recommendations:

- Review and revise as necessary all relevant County ordinances to assure that ample open space, especially in the Figure 5-1 Overlay area, will be provided for current and future residents. Encourage the cities to conduct corresponding ordinance reviews and revisions.
- Use BLM land outside of the Overlay in land exchanges that increase public conservation and recreation values (See: Public Lands, Section 6.3.3, and the above discussions of the Open Space Overlay and the Foothills).
- Create regional open space parks/preserves at Hubbard Reservoir, Blacks Creek Reservoir and Indian Creek Reservoir, Kuna Butte and Initial Point.
- Acquire title to Hubbard Recreation Area from the State of Idaho, and develop the property to provide permanent public open space, wildlife habitat, trails, wetlands, and fisheries
- Provide connectivity (non-motorized paths and habitat linkages) along Indian, Ten Mile, and Mason Creeks, between Hubbard Recreation Area, Blacks Creek and Indian Creek Reservoirs, and between communities and open space areas.
- Pursue trails along key irrigation canals, such as Ridenbaugh, Mora, and Rawson, that can provide regional connectivity.
- Work with irrigation districts and landowners to create paths along other creeks, canals and drains. Medium and small channels should provide important neighborhood connections. Title searches may facilitate pathway creation.
- Involve a broad range of user groups in developing the trails system.

SNAKE RIVER CANYON – BIRDS OF PREY NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA

The Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (NCA), encompassing 605,000 acres of public land in southwest Idaho (485,000 acres under BLM jurisdiction, 120,000 acres of State and other lands), was established in 1993 to protect a unique environment that supports one of the world's densest concentrations of nesting birds of prey. Falcons, eagles, hawks, and owls occur here in unique profusion and variety, with over 800 nesting pairs coming here each spring to mate and raise their young.

The NCA is nature in the rough.. For the most part the birds are wary of humans and keep their distance. Public facilities in the area are few, but the raptors and their environment offer rich rewards to those who explore the area.

Numerous recreation opportunities are available such as camping, boating, fishing, hiking, picnicking, hunting, OHV riding, and scenic/wildlife viewing. A developed campground is located at Cove Recreation Site and primitive camping is available throughout the area.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- This part of Ada County has the largest contiguous blocks of public land providing open space and opportunities for recreation. The NCA is administered and managed by BLM, pursuant to a recently completed Resource Management Plan for the Area.
- All recreational use of public land within the NCA must be compatible with the purposes for which the NCA was created – conservation of raptors and their habitat. In fact, the NCA is an ecotourism destination for bird watchers from around the world
- The Orchard Training Area, a National Guard gunnery and maneuver area is contained entirely within the boundaries of the NCA and is an important economic component to the Treasure Valley economy. Recreational access to this area must remain restricted for public safety reasons.
- Most of the 18 mile long Snake River Canyon in Ada County is BLM land within the NCA. The canyon is generally open to public recreation; recreationists can hike into the deep canyon at several locations, but there are no riverside campgrounds in Ada County. The roads to Swan Falls Dam and Celebration Point downstream provide the best auto access.
- With Swan Falls recreation site at Swan Falls Dam and Celebration Park downstream, float boat trips have become popular.
- Within the NCA overall, recreation access is primarily via trails and two-track roads generally developed during early settlement of the area.
- Outside (e.g. north and east) of the NCA boundary are lands identified for further study by the BLM for future disposal purposes. These lands may provide opportunities for land exchanges to conserve high conservation lands identified in the Overlay map.

Recommendations:

- Continue active cooperation and coordination with BLM in implementing its Resource Management Plan for the NCA. Focus on ensuring and augmenting public recreation access (especially trails) and facilities, consistent with the natural resource protection mandate of the NCA. Particular priority should be placed on appropriate access and facilities along the Snake River corridor.
- Develop a Snake River Water Trail to provide a recreational connection with neighboring counties.

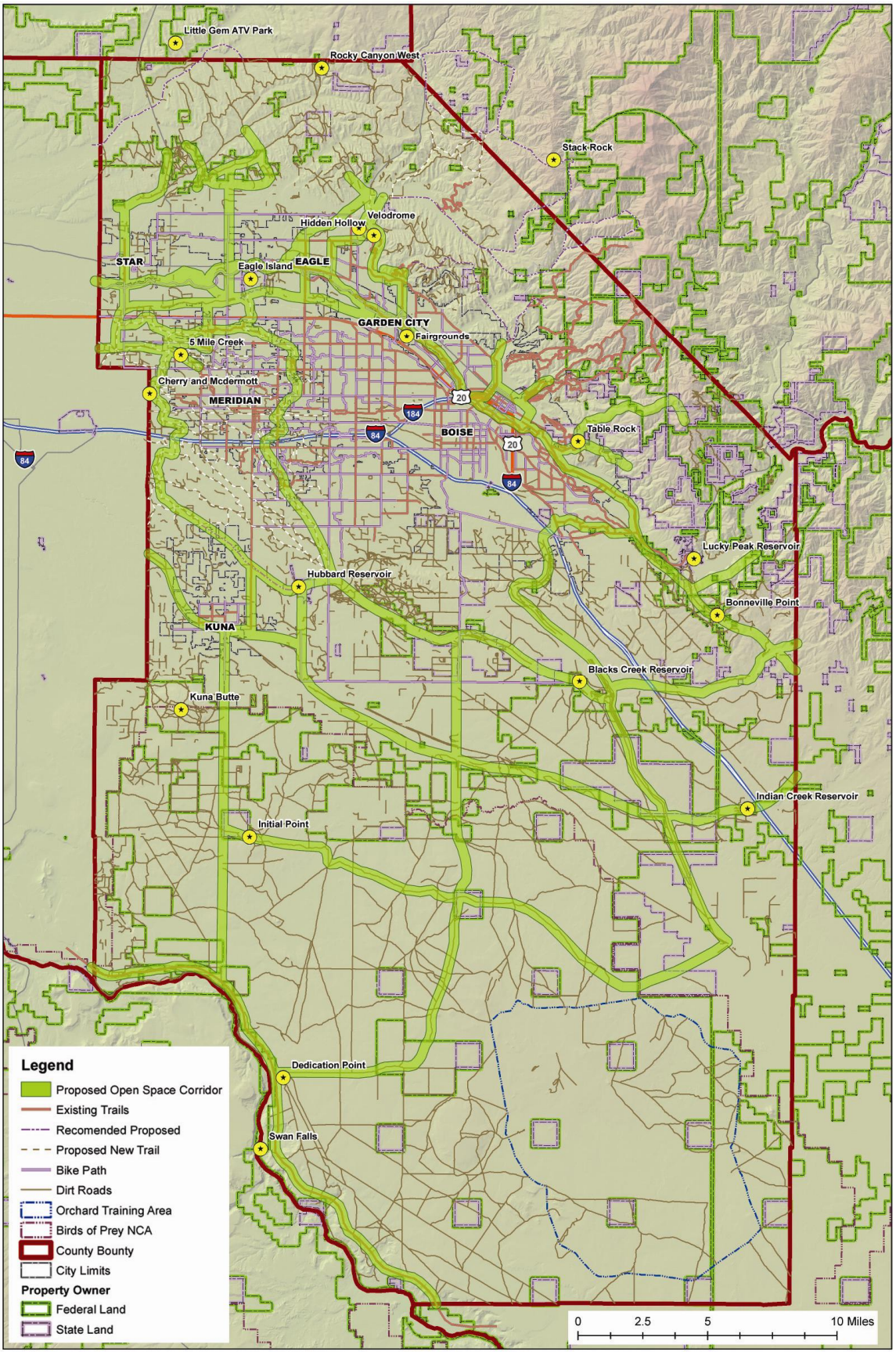
STITCHING IT ALL TOGETHER—A COUNTY-WIDE TRAIL SYSTEM

Hand-in-hand with preservation of a natural open space system, creation of a county-wide trail system providing access to and enjoyment of this open space is by far the highest priority expressed consistently by the public to date. The Task Force effort has assessed where we stand in terms of meeting this objective, and formed several recommendations intended to further the process of making such a system a reality. The results of this work are illustrated on Figure 5-2, Conceptual County-Wide Trail System, and discussed in the paragraphs below.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Parts and pieces of what could become a county-wide trail system have been studied, with some localized implementation, over the past several years. Work to date in this regard is:
  - Generally focused on individual sub-areas of the County, and

Figure 5-2: Conceptual County-Wide Trail System



  - Inconsistent in terms of detail and level of study, ranging from relatively accurate and route-specific planning, through broad conceptual corridor identification, to no planning at all.

- A good example of work toward achieving a comprehensive, multi-use trail system has been done for the North Foothills, as part of Eagle's 2007 Comprehensive Plan. Included within Eagle's plan is a proposed trail system map for the area between State Highways 16 and 55, from the City's north AOI boundary to the county line. This proposed trail system (core routes and linkages shown on Figure 5-2) was developed by a committee representing multiple user groups and a high degree of knowledge regarding the resources of the area. Conceptual connection points to the region beyond the City's North Foothills planning area are also shown on the City's map.
- A comparable level of work has been done and continues along the Boise River corridor, related to completion of the Greenbelt throughout the county and beyond.
- The Boise Foothills have also received considerable attention aimed at identifying and providing trail access. For this area of the County, Figure 5-2 illustrates [1] existing trails, both formal and informal, and [2] the general alignments of trails that have been proposed and are being pursued (e.g., by Ridge to Rivers). The Ridge to Rivers trail system provides an excellent model for regional trail system connectivity.
- Beyond these individual areas (foothills and Boise River), little work has been done on planning for and achieving an interconnected trail system. The central and south county areas have received the least attention, and countywide linkages (i.e. city-to-city, city-to-surrounding open space, major highway crossings, routes through developed areas, etc.) have not been explored in a comprehensive manner.
- Many opportunities exist for creating the kind of interconnected, county-wide trail system desired by county residents (a large portion of these opportunities are illustrated on Figure 5-2—e.g. existing trails and roads, stream corridors, canals, etc.) However each opportunity faces challenges. Primary opportunities and associated challenges include:
  - Existing informal roads and trails that have been used by recreationists over time: In many of the currently undeveloped areas of the county, including much of the land included in the Figure 5-1 Overlay, the owners of large private land-holdings (ranches) have allowed recreation trail access into and through their lands. However, this access is not "by right" and can likely continue in the long term only through negotiation, planning as part of the development process, or public acquisition of needed right-of-way.

    The same kind of steps will also be needed for some public lands that are managed primarily for wildlife or other natural resource purposes (e.g. water supply reservoirs, wildlife management areas). While informal access to such areas may exist now, increases in demand over time may require restrictions or designation of specific routes.
  - Stream channel corridors: Challenges related to private land status and/or natural resource (water quality, wildlife habitat) protection are present along many of the stream corridors tributary to the Boise River.
  - Irrigation system canals, creeks and drains: The historic irrigation system throughout the county and the Treasure Valley as a whole provides outstanding opportunities for trails connections, with the added dimension of historic education/interpretation. Three primary challenges are faced in pursuing recreation trail access along these irrigation canals and drains. These are [1] public safety concerns and associated liability burden on the Irrigation District(s), [2] protection of irrigation system operations and avoidance of

increased maintenance and repair requirements, and [3] ownership status of the conveyance route. The first two of these challenges can be, and have been, met satisfactorily in some cases. However, the third can be near insurmountable. In many locations throughout the irrigation system, conveyances are build on easements from multiple private landowners along the route (i.e. the canals or drains are not build on unrestricted rights of way or not owned outright); in such cases, underlying easement agreements most often do not permit general public/recreation access and obtaining agreement from landowners may not be feasible.

- Historic roads and trails: One of the most important unifying "threads" in the county and the Treasure valley overall are the Oregon Trail remnants still apparent in some locations. Even more so than the irrigation system, these trails provide opportunities for education/interpretation as well as connectivity. Primary challenges in using these trail remnants include private land status in some cases (e.g. Goodale's Cutoff north of Eagle) and protection of a valuable cultural resource in its own right.

- A trail system, however it is ultimately planned and achieved, will be the main focus of the resource carrying capacity and user group conflict issues discussed earlier. Solutions to these issues must be found.

Recommendations:

- Through a cooperative effort and an extensive public/landowner involvement process, adopt a major, county-wide Open Space Corridor network, using the network shown on Figure 5-2 as a starting point. This network, which includes the Boise River corridor, will provide a regional system of greenways, or linear parks linking the cities with one another and the cities with the open space system proposed in the foothills (north, central and east) and the South County/NCA/Snake River Canyon.
- Recognize, adopt, and implement the trail system developed as part of and included within Eagle's 2007 Comprehensive Plan for the North Foothills. As part of this process, questions of resource carrying capacity and accommodation of multiple, potentially conflicting user groups must be explored and resolved.
- Use the Eagle North Foothills trail system (process and product) as a model for preparing trail plans in other portions of the county. This includes direct involvement by user groups and people with intimate knowledge of local resources. For example, in the central and east Foothills, Figure 5-2 shows a combination of designated, established trails, trail alignments proposed by this Task Force, Ridge to Rivers, and others, and existing, informal trails and roads that are used for recreational access. These "raw materials" should be used to plan for a full trail access system. The same general perspective applies the foothills north of Star and the entire South County area.
- As part of planning for and adoption of the regional Open Space Corridor network and sub-area trail planning system(s), specify locations and design solutions for crossings of major barriers, such as highways. For example, conceptual trail connections across State Highway 55, linking the north and central foothills, have been discussed at the Dry Creek Crossing, near Shadow Valley Golf Course, and associated with the Avimor development to the north; such connections, which will involve over- or under-crossing to accommodate some uses—such as equestrian, should be identified and planned. This same challenge must be faced in other areas of the County.
- Ensure that planning for and management of county-wide greenway and trail systems
  - recognizes resource carrying capacity, including area- or season-specific restrictions as/if necessary to protect resource values in perpetuity; and

  - accommodates user groups in a manner that minimizes land use and user group conflicts. Of particular importance in this regard will be provisions for equestrian riding activities, bicycling, pet walking and general hiking/walking. A range of solutions will need to be considered, including area-specific focus or priority, separate systems, or sufficiently large facilities to accommodate all uses.

- Specific, priority action/project recommendations:
  - See above discussions of the Foothills, Boise River, South County, and Snake River Canyon/Birds of Prey NCA; other priorities include:
  - Eagle Velodrome to Boise Ridge Trail
  - Boise River Water Trail
  - Black Cliffs/Diversion Dam trails in east Boise – cliff-top both north and south of the river, and along south bank of Diversion Pool

6. Accomplishing Conservation & Open Space Preservation in Ada County

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to recommend implementation steps, strategies, and tools that Ada County and its cities should consider to achieve the kind of open space system described in Chapter 5. Preservation of open space is a balancing act between private property rights and the desire to preserve open space. Achieving the goal through a variety of strategies and funding mechanisms will ensure the effective implementation of an open space plan.

Task Force recommendations include a mix of strategies that encourage preservation through voluntary and incentive based options and provide alternatives for funding.

6.2 Policy Recommendations

To achieve open space conservation, clear policy is a necessary first step to guide future development and implementation decisions. Rather than create another set of policies the Task Force recommends the County and cities follow the policy guidelines in these existing documents:

- Ada County Parks, Open Space, and Trails Plan
- Ada County Comprehensive Plan
- Blueprint for Good Growth Phase One (BGG)
- Boise City Foothills Policy Plan
- Eagle City Foothills Plan
- Boise, Eagle, Garden City. Kuna, Meridian, Star Comprehensive Plans (revised and adopted per P6. of this report)
- Forest Service Open Space Conservation Strategy
- BLM Resource Management Plan

The Task Force recommends the following implementation actions to achieve the stated policies and goals in these various plans. These actions are listed in order of sequential priority base but not of importance; all are equally important.

Specific Implementation Actions

P (Policy) 1. Conduct Public Process

- Recommendation: The County should participate in the effort being put together by Idaho Smart Growth and the Land Trust for the Treasure Valley to involve the public in gaining support for the strategies in this report. It is also strongly encouraged for the cities to participate in this effort.
- Summary: Building public support for the recommendations in this report will be critical to future success. Thorough public review and opportunity for input is necessary in the development of a successful County-wide open space effort. As the Task Force was unable to conduct a public process we recommend this report be used as a draft regional open space plan for a thorough public involvement process within the next year. By joining with this process the public input that is necessary can be achieved this year.

P2. Establish County-wide Open Space Advisory Committee

- Recommendation: Create a County-wide open space advisory committee to provide guidance on issues of regional interest and to carry forward the recommendations of this plan. Members of the current Task Force might be interested in continuing to serve, but it would important to make sure each jurisdiction has representation as well as the various community stakeholders.
- Summary: The Task Force recognizes the value of establishing a group to advance recommendations in this report. Collaboration is important and easy to support, but sometimes difficult to foster. A County-wide Open Space Advisory Committee will help facilitate efforts between Ada County, the six incorporated cities, Ada County Highway District, federal and state agencies, and other entities working on various aspects of open space. If the recommendations of this plan are to succeed, regional perspectives and cooperation will be essential. This regional approach will need to be structured to provide a voice for each community's efforts, and allow each community to retain its autonomy and community character. If done correctly, this should add value to existing or future efforts.

P3. Adopt County Parks, Open Space and Trails Plan

- Recommendation: If necessary the County should update this plan to reflect this report and adopt it, and we encourage each jurisdiction to adopt it for their areas of impact.
- Summary: The County spent significant resources developing this plan and gathering significant public input and comment from all stakeholders. This plan is cited as one of the underlying policy plans to guide the actions recommended in this report.

P4. Review and Adjust Existing Ordinances

- Recommendation: The County should review and revise their ordinances to ensure they can implement the open space plan as adopted, and all jurisdictions within Ada County are encouraged to do the same.
- Summary: An open space plan is a policy document much like a comprehensive plan and would need ordinances for implementation. As several of the recommended tools are voluntary, implementation will require ordinance language that both allows and preferably creates incentives for property owners and developers to utilize these voluntary options.

P5. Achieve Consistent Open Space Language in Comprehensive Plans

- Recommendation: All comprehensive plans should include language recognizing the Ada County Parks, Open Space and Trails Plan once adopted. The Task Force encourages all cities to include open space language in their comprehensive plans that reflects and implements the policies and recommendations of this report and existing regional or other applicable plans

P6. Prepare and Adopt Planning Guides

- Recommendation: All jurisdictions within Ada County should adopt any of the relevant referenced policy guides that falls within their 'planning boundary' per the planning boundaries identified in the Blueprint Area of Impact Policy and Process as adopted by the Blueprint Consortium. (Blueprint GM-7 & GM-18)
- Summary: The purpose of the recommendation to establish consistent policy throughout an area for the purpose of clarity for developers and the public. In the instances where multiple policy guides exist, as in the case of the foothills with one set of guidelines from Eagle for the

foothills and another set from Boise and a possible third set from Ada County, we recommend the jurisdictions adopt one set of policies per P7.

P7. Prepare and Adopt Consistent Policies for Key Geographic Areas.

- Recommendations**:**
  - Adopt one set of policy guidelines and ordinance for development in the foothills.
  - Adopt one set of policy guidelines and ordinance for development along the river corridor.
  - Make completion of the Greenbelt a high priority.
  - Adopt policy guidelines for providing open space for south Ada County.
  - In conjunction with the BLM (i.e. consistent with the BLM's Resource Management Plan) adopt policies regarding the Snake River and Birds of Prey areas.
  - Adopt one set of policy guidelines for creation of a connected, county wide trail system.
- Summary: Public comment has been consistent in the desire to protect both the river corridor and the foothills. Currently we have different plans and policies adopted by each jurisdiction to address these areas. The adoption of one set of guiding policies by jurisdiction whose comprehensive plans include any portion of either of these areas would provide important continuity in the development and preservation in these two unique geographic areas. We encourage using Boise City's Foothills Policy Plan and Ordinance as a starting point for developing foothills policy as it is the most thorough, and had an extensive public process in its development. Boise City's River Ordinance also provides the best starting point for developing a river corridor ordinance.

6.3 Tools for Implementation

This section identifies and makes recommendations regarding implementation tools that the Task Force considers to be available, viable strategies for accomplishing stated policies and goals. While much of the opportunity for open space preservation exists in the County's rural tier it will be critical for the cities to coordinate their open space plans and policies with the County's plans if we are to create a connected system of trails and open space throughout the county. Therefore the cities are included in these recommendations where applicable.

It should be noted that not all tools considered by the Task Force are considered to be available and viable, at least currently. Potential tools assessed during the Task Force effort were each classified in one of the following terms:

a. Currently available and should be explored and implemented.
b. Should be considered but needs more research.
c. Exists but currently used for other purposes.
d. Not available at this time because it either requires significant legislative action, or is not politically viable.

Only those tools classified as "a" and "b" are discussed below. For those tools classified in categories "c" and "d" (listed in a Task Force work product available under separate cover), the Task Force makes the following recommendation.

Future Tools for Implementation

- Recommendation: Regularly review to assess whether the environment has changed enough to consider using any of these tools for open space conservation or maintenance.
- Summary: The Task Force wanted to acknowledge the future potential of these tools. However we considered establishing recommendations for them at this time to be premature

other than to recommend that they be reviewed on some regular basis for reconsideration. This task could be given to the Advisory Committee.

6.3.1 Open Space as Part of the Development Process

Regulatory Mechanisms (RM)

RM1. Design Criteria

- Recommendations:
  - Establish consistent, county-wide (i.e. County and cities) standards for development which will encourage the inclusion of open space and trail connectivity while providing the developer the ability to achieve higher densities within the areas for the built living environment.
  - Create consistent ordinance language county-wide that directs developers to connect their open space and paths/trails to the larger community's existing or planned for open space and pathways when available.
  - Establish a design review process that; (a) complements the inclusion of open space, and (b) assures the quality of design in higher density product thereby enlisting the support of the public towards a mechanism to achieve open space.
- Summary: Opposition to density is one of the challenges we have for conserving open space. Often this opposition occurs from a lack of understanding that good design can address many of the concerns related to density. Developers recognize the value of open space for their development and often plan trails and open space. When coordinated with surrounding plans, these efforts can provide greater public amenities. If a developer is aware of this at the beginning of a project it makes it easier for them to design these open space attributes into a project.

RM2. Cluster and Density Bonus

- Recommendation**:** Jurisdictions should write these tools into all applicable codes to provide incentives to land owners for preservation of natural open space.
- Summary: As with several of the above incentive based tools all of these can be utilized and to some degree currently are around the county. Each jurisdiction should review its applicable ordinances and develop language to include these criteria to create incentives for and to facilitate development with greater densities.

RM3. Conservation Subdivision

- Recommendation: Create an ordinance for conservation subdivision in the County and cities (with the goal of consistent language/provisions across the County and all cities.
- Summary: A conservation subdivision is intended to balance development with meaningful open space within a development. Boise City's Foothills Ordinance is an example.

RM4. Flood plain Ordinance

- Recommendation**:** Establish a county-wide floodplain ordinance based on policy recommendation P7, above.

RM5. Amend the existing Planned Community Ordinance

- Recommendation: Ada County should amend the existing Planned Community Ordinance to increase the minimum requirement for natural open space in rural areas with a high concentration of natural resource and open space values (as defined via the Overlay). A

relatively low (10-20%) requirement may be appropriate in unconstrained areas or areas within City areas of impact; however a goal of 50% or more should be achieved in areas with high resource/open space values.

- Summary: The current ordinance requires 10% of public open space with other language about trails, parks and other amenities. Ten percent may be adequate for planned communities in unconstrained areas or existing areas of city impact but does not reflect the emerging national standard of 50% (Sonoran Institute, 2007) for areas with high concentrations of natural resource values (e.g., the Ada County Foothills)

Incentive/Voluntary Mechanisms (IM)

These tools can be and are used today. Our recommendations are to help increase their application. Adoption of a County-wide Open Space Plan will assist staff and developers in recognizing opportunities for applying these tools.

IM1. Purchase of Development Rights (PDRs)

- Recommendation**:** Have a fund available to use when opportunities arise to purchase development rights for land that is identified as important for open space preservation.
- Summary**:** Utilizing an available source of funds a city or county may purchase the development rights of property. The property remains in private ownership but can no longer be developed based on the underlying property rights. Currently used in farmland protection this might apply well to preserve other types of open space.

IM2. Voluntary Real Estate Transfer Fees

- Recommendation**:** Encourage the use of this tool to fund the maintenance and stewardship of open space within developments.
- Summary: This tool has been used sparingly but is gaining interest among developers. The concept involves taking a percentage of the sale of land and home that is assessed at closing and placing it into a dedicated fund for open space stewardship. There are a number of ways to establish the structure and process for administering the fund and open space management. When used as a tool, require developments to illustrate the method they will use to preserve and care for open space. This tool is closely tied to the method of managing and maintaining open space within a development.

IM3. Voluntary Donations

- Recommendations:
  - Consider options to increase incentives for donations of land or development rights. This could include property tax breaks or statewide tax incentives.
  - Have each local jurisdiction support a resolution encouraging Congress to adopt the improved tax benefits for conservation easements.
- Summary: While some tax benefits exist for protecting land in perpetuity, additional incentives can help. Support of improved federal, state, and local tax legislation can also help increase incentives for land donations.

IM4. Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs)

- Recommendation: Implement a TDR program, based on an adopted County-wide Open Space Plan that specifies “sending” and “receiving” areas.

- Summary: A property owner who holds land in an area identified as a candidate for conservation, but is not protected from development can trade these rights with another property owner who owns lands that are better for development.

IM5. Historic Preservation Act

- Recommendation: Use this where there is a nexus between open space and historic preservation as a way of conserving the open space as well as the historic value.

IM6. Density

- Recommendations:
  - Provide incentive-based alternatives for preservation of natural open space, including density bonuses, density transfers, and transfer of density rights.
  - Develop an educational program to help the public understand density in relationship to open space.
- Summary: As the valley grows, density will increasingly be a valuable but controversial tool to protect open space. Many developers are willing to build more densely but the often the public and sometimes even the decision-makers do not fully understand this equation.

6.3.2 Open Space Acquisition/Funding (AF)

AF1. County-wide Acquisition Fund

- Recommendation: The County should establish a fund for the purpose of purchasing open space, using monies from the general fund (committed each year during the budget process) as well as from the other mechanisms described below. Cities should be invited and encouraged to participate in this fund.
- Summary: The purpose of this fund is to pool monies from various sources to create a larger amount of capital.. This fund is not intended to replace funds the cities currently use for their parks programs.

AF2. Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT)

- Recommendation: Designate Ada County's entire PILT payment each year to a Regional Open Space Fund.
- Summary: Payments in Lieu of Taxes (or PILT) are Federal payments to local governments that help offset losses in property taxes due to nontaxable Federal lands within their boundaries. Congress appropriates PILT payments each year. In Ada County, PILT payments over the past 5 years were:

FY03	FY04	FY05	FY06	FY07
$269,997	**$277,026**	**$284,581**	**$425,620**	**$418,995**

Initial research indicates that past PILT payments have been received and allocated by Ada County into the general fund. While payments have been regular and increased in FY06, the future amount of these payments is uncertain. A change in funding amount or formula would likely affect the amount, either positively or negatively.

AF3. Federal and State Grants and Programs

- Recommendation: Hire a full-time staff person dedicated to understanding these various programs and writing grant requests for the purpose of open space acquisition, conservation, and trails and pathways development.

- Summary: There are a number of federal programs such as the Urban and Community Forest Grant, the Community Transportation Enhancement Fund, Off-highway Vehicle Programs, EPA, Health, Wellness Federal Funds for Pathways and others related to smart growth projects, including open space preservation. Assigning a full time staff person to learn about these and understand how these funds are used and when to apply for them enables the County to take full advantage of these opportunities.

AF4. Serial Levy

- Recommendation**:** The Task Force recommends a serial levy. The timing and amount to be raised by a serial levy is up to the discretion of the Ada County Board of Commissioners. Funds will be dedicated solely to the acquisition and management of a county-wide open space system and corridor network.

AF5. Tipping Fee at Landfill

- Recommendation: Implement an added fee to the tipping fee at the landfill for open space acquisition.
- Summary: This would impact the solid waste rates and could compete with recycling. Some nexus for open space would need to be established.It is fairly common for local jurisdictions to use fees to help fund programs. This fee would make most sense if there was a fund established with various sources whether at the County only or a regional one as recommended in AF1.

AF6. Tax Deed Property

- Recommendation: Determine if tax deed property contains conservation values. If it does, the County should designate it as open space land and retain ownership. If not, then sell the land and place the County portion of proceeds into the acquisition fund.
- Summary: Occasionally the County receives property due to non payment of taxes. Each year an assessment of properties that reverted to the county should be analyzed for possible conservation values. One example are slivers of land in the Hillside to the Hollow area that the County is retaining for open space values. If the County auctions the property, the proceeds are divided among the taxing districts. Ada County could decide to place their portion of funds into an open space acquisition fund.

AF7. Impact Fees

- Recommendation: Develop a capital improvement plan to determine whether impact fees might be necessary. This should include an analysis of impact fees necessary with a serial levy and without. Negotiate with all cities to determine commitment to impact fees.
- Summary: I.C. 67-8204(2) allows impact fees for public facilities including open space. Because some cities already impose impact fees for parks and some do not, there will need to be consensus of all cities in order to consider the imposition of any impact fees.

6.3.3 Public Lands (PL)

PL1. Land Exchanges

- Recommendation: Utilize land exchanges and acquisitions to increase public lands within the Overlay (See Section 5.2). Public lands outside of the Overlay area should be considered for possible disposal in order to acquire higher priority open space within the Overlay areas, consistent with the public land managing agency's mission.

- Summary: Federal lands constitute approximately 42% of land ownership in Ada County, most of this public land is managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) with the largest block in the southern part of the county as part of the Snake River Birds of Prey, National Conservation Area. While this public land provides the foundation for an open space system, some of these lands are dispersed tracts with varied levels of conservation value. These tracts of public land with low conservation values can be exchanged to acquire other more important private land with greater regional conservation values within the Overlay district, particularly if it also meets other goals of the BLM.

  It is possible that public land exchanges will become one of the most significant avenues for future open space conservation efforts. It is a time-consuming process that requires broad public involvement to be successful. With the Four Rivers Field office embarking on an update to their Resource Management Plan, local citizens have an opportunity to express their desires, and assist the BLM in determining the future of public lands close to home.

PL2. Recreation and Public Purposes Act (RPP)

- Recommendations:
  - Utilize the federal program, Recreation and Public Purposes Act, to acquire public lands to increase the public benefit from parks, open space and trails when the level of development required by RPP is consistent with local and regional open space plans.
  - If the community's desire for parcels of public land is to retain its natural values, habitat and trail opportunities, consider other tools such as a Cooperative Management Agreement to partner with Federal entities for management and stewardship.

- Summary: Recognizing the strong public need for a nationwide system of parks and other recreational and public purposes areas, the Congress, in 1954, enacted the Recreation and Public Purposes Act. The act authorizes the sale or lease of public lands for recreational or public purposes to State and local governments and to qualified nonprofit organizations, the amount of land an applicant can purchase is set by law. Applicants will be required to first accept a lease, or lease with option to purchase, to assure approved development takes place before a sale is made and a patent (government deed) is issued.

  One challenge communities may face in using this tool, is the level of development required by the BLM, which may run counter to a community's desire for the public land to remain in a wild and natural state, with passive recreation opportunities such as trails. There also exists a philosophy among some that public lands should be used to increase public values associated with open space, habitat and trail opportunities, rather than other public purposes of meeting the demands of growth in a community. There is a strong nexus of using public land values to achieve the conservation of open space goals of this plan and the broader community desire.

PL3. Cooperative Management Agreements

- Recommendation: Consider Cooperative Management Agreements and public/private partnerships to jointly fund and manage public lands deemed important to a Conservation, Open Space and Trails system as an alternative to the RPP process.

- Summary: The federal land management agencies are supportive of partnerships that help them manage their public lands. Through a variety of mechanisms such as Cooperative Management Agreements, Challenge Cost Share agreements and others, the agencies encourage partnerships in solving conservation challenges on the ground. An example includes the Ridge to Rivers Partnership of 5 federal, state and local government agencies that manage the foothills Ridge to Rivers Trail System. Where public lands are part of a

regional open space system, using a partnership approach brings more expertise, resources and public support to the table and can open the door to other opportunities. Engaging the community in partnerships through organizations, citizens groups or individuals can add greatly to a public private partnership.