

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

TO:

**FROM: County of Sacramento
Department of
Environmental Review
and Assessment
827 7th Street, Room 220
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 874-7914**

CONTACT: Dennis Yeast

**SUBJECT: NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL
IMPACT REPORT**

Sacramento County will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the project identified below. We need to know the views of interested persons as to the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the EIR. Agencies should comment on the scope and content of the environmental information that is germane to the agencies' statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project.

The project description, location, and the probable environmental effects are contained in the attached materials.

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date, but not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice.

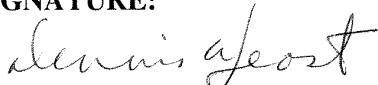
Please send your response to Dennis E. Yeast, Environmental Coordinator at the address shown above. We will need the name for a contact person in your agency.

PROJECT TITLE: Dry Creek Master Plan (Control Number 00-PRE-0593)

**PROJECT LOCATION: Rio Linda/Elverta SACRAMENTO
City (Nearest) County**

**PROJECT APPLICANT: County of Sacramento
Department of Regional Parks,
Recreation, and Open Space
3711 Branch Center Road
Sacramento, CA 95827**

DATE: 10/14/02

SIGNATURE:

**TITLE: Environmental Coordinator
PHONE: (916) 874-7914**

cc: State Clearinghouse

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

In 1990 the Rio Linda/Elverta Parks and Recreation District recognized the need to protect the Dry Creek Parkway as a critical open space resource, and encouraged the County to pursue a strategy to plan for and maintain the Parkway. At that time the Sacramento County Department of Regional Parks, Recreation and Open Space began development of the Dry Creek Parkway Recreation Master Plan (Master Plan). The Master Plan was completed through the draft phase, but funding shortages halted completion of the Master Plan. In 1999, the County successfully competed for grant funding to resume the Master Plan. Due to the amount of time that has elapsed, the draft Master Plan has required revisions to address the current conditions of the Parkway, the community, and new regulatory considerations. This Master Plan incorporates the essential elements of the initial draft plan with updated information about resources, community needs, and implementation strategies.

Sacramento County's Department of Environmental Review and Assessment (DERA) will prepare a Program EIR that assesses environmental impacts that could occur as a result of adoption of the Dry Creek Parkway Recreation Master Plan. The purpose of the EIR will be to allow the County of Sacramento to consider broad policy alternatives and program wide mitigation measures and to avoid reconsideration of basic policies at a later time. Subsequent projects to implement the Master Plan will be subject to further environmental review. The EIR will contain a program level of analysis to be used in conjunction with subsequent actions in the Master Plan such as tiered environmental documents for specific projects. However, the amenities (paved bike trails, staging areas, picnic sites, etc.,) presented in the Master Plan do not have site specific plans and their location on the Plan's exhibits represents an approximation. Therefore, additional site specific environmental analysis, including a public review process, will be required prior to construction of the amenities at the time plans become available.

The EIR is an informational document used in the planning and decision making process. It is not the purpose of an EIR to recommend either approval or denial of a project. CEQA requires the decision makers to balance the benefits of a proposed project against its unavoidable environmental risks.

PROJECT LOCATION

The Dry Creek Parkway is located in north central Sacramento County and extends from the Placer/Sacramento County line to the Sacramento County/Sacramento City line (Figure 1). The Dry Creek Parkway is located between Watt Avenue to the east, Rio Linda Boulevard to the west, and is centrally bisected by Elkhorn Boulevard. The majority of the Parkway is within the Community of Rio Linda/Elverta; however, approximately a mile of the northwestern corner is shared with the Community of Antelope (Figure 2).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Dry Creek Parkway Recreation Master Plan (the Plan) is a policy document that establishes the planning framework for the future design, implementation, and management of the Dry Creek area between the Sacramento County Line and the Sacramento City Line. The Goals and Policies in the Master Plan provide specific guidance on critical Parkway implementation issues, so that all aspects of the Parkway development and operation will be consistent with the agreed upon Parkway concept.

The objectives of the Dry Creek Parkway Master Plan are to:

- Preserve, protect, enhance, and interpret the natural and cultural resources of the corridor
- Provide a natural, continuous open space corridor from Placer County to the Sacramento city limits, and form part of the 70-mile regional greenway loop
- Retain the rural character of the surrounding Rio Linda/Elverta community
- Allow for the integration of active and passive recreational uses that will have minimal impacts on the natural resources
- Preserve flood conveyance and capacity within the Dry Creek floodway

The Parkway shall be designed, implemented and managed to achieve these objectives in a balanced and sustainable manner. As future activities and projects for the Dry Creek Parkway are proposed, they will be evaluated for compliance with this Master Plan to ensure that the vision of the Dry Creek Parkway is maintained. New staging areas, trails, visitor's centers, and bridges are proposed as future potential park facilities in the Master Plan and will be analyzed in a programmatic fashion in the subject environmental document.

While the Dry Creek Parkway Recreation Master Plan guides activities on both private and public land, it does not usurp existing private property rights or disallow existing uses that are permitted under the County's current zoning and land use ordinances, General Plan, and the Rio Linda/Elverta Community Plan. Any land use changes such as plan amendments or rezones, development, or other activities that require discretionary County approval will be subject to the policies contained in the Master Plan.

Concept Plans

Specific concepts for the future development of the Parkway are provided for the North, Central, and South segments of the Parkway, including equestrian and paved trail alignments, staging areas, rest areas, restrooms, and picnic facilities. The Master Plan also includes proposed interpretive programs and potential mitigation opportunities for the Parkway. The proposed amenities for each segment of the parkway are listed below.

North Segment (see Figure 3)

- A **Nature Study** area is proposed for the Gibson Ranch Annex located south of the Sacramento/Placer County line, on the east side of Dry Creek. A small portion of this area immediately adjacent to the school property would be designated as Limited Public Use and designed to accommodate a **20-car/one-bus parking lot, several barbecues, a group picnic shelter, a restroom, a drinking fountain and a small turf area for day camping use**. An easement access through the adjacent school property off of Watt Avenue is recommended to provide access to the area. A **paved multi-use trail and an equestrian trail** extend from the County line along Dry Creek to Elverta Road on the east side of the creek. An equestrian trail is also located on the west side of the creek. The equestrian and multi-use trails cross Elverta Road and proceeds around the Cherry Island Golf Course. A **multi-use bridge** crossing for equestrian, pedestrian and bicycle use is proposed near Northbrook Park to enable access to Gibson Ranch from the eastern side of the Parkway. Two additional **multi-use bridges** are proposed to provide crossings of the North and Main Forks at U Street, and to facilitate access to the soccer complex for residents in the neighborhoods to the west of the Parkway. Both trails cross the proposed bridge over the North Fork and proceeds southerly along the east bank.
- A **staging area** is proposed adjacent to the south side of Elverta Road at the intersection with 28th Avenue, where there is an existing light-controlled pedestrian crossing. This area is designated for Developed Use with a **12-car/trailer parking lot, a restroom, drinking fountains, watering troughs and hitching posts for horses, picnic table and a small turf area**.
- The **paved multi-use and equestrian trails** continue past the staging area and then follow the creek channel around the north side of the Cherry Island Soccer Complex. Two **rest areas** are proposed along this section, **both picnic facilities**, and one with a **portable restroom**. The paved and equestrian trails continue across the proposed bridge over the Main Fork and then proceed south along the east bank of the North Fork. An additional equestrian trail is located on the west bank of the Main Fork.

Central Segment (see Figure 4)

- The majority of this stretch is designated as Agriculture, with the area around the Dry Creek Ranch House designated as Historic/Cultural Resource. A **rest area** is proposed north of Q Street on the east side of the West Fork. Three road crossings are needed: two at Q Street and one at Dry Creek Road. Where possible the **multi-use paved trail users and equestrian trail** users should utilize a combined crossing.
- **Trails** in this section of the Parkway include a **paved trail** located along the east bank of the North Fork, with a spur running along Q Street to provide linkages to the residential areas east of the Main Fork. The paved trail runs past the Dry Creek Ranch House and then parallels the east side of Dry Creek Road where it meets the crossing. The main equestrian trail follows the paved trail, with an alternative equestrian alignment along the west side of the Main Fork. Both trails coincide at the Dry Creek Road crossing.

- At the site of the existing Dry Creek Ranch House, proposed developments include **pedestrian trails, restrooms, picnic tables and benches, and gardens**. The Dry Creek Ranch facilities will include a **parking lot** for the historic museum combined with a **staging area** for trail users.

South Segment (see Figure 5)

- The land use designations in the south area of the Dry Creek Parkway include three Open Space Preserves, two Nature Study areas, two Limited Public Use areas, Agriculture, and Developed Use areas at Depot Park and Hayer Park. The Open Space Preserves are located immediately west of Dry Creek Road, west of the Sacramento Northern Bike Trail, and between Rio Linda Boulevard and Ascot Avenue. One Limited Public Use area is situated between Cherry Lane and Depot Park, and flanked by Nature Study area on both sides. This is proposed as the site for a **nature center** that could be developed utilizing an existing barn located off of Cherry Lane. Proposed amenities associated with the nature center might include a **30-car parking lot, a native plant botanic garden with pedestrian trails, a fishing pond with small piers, a fish viewing platform, a native plant nursery, and a nature art/book store**.
- The second Limited Public Use area is east of Rio Linda Boulevard and adjacent to the Sacramento Northern Bicycle Trail. A **staging area** is proposed at this location, with **restrooms and picnic facilities**. A staging area is also proposed within the existing Developed Use area at the intersection of the Sacramento Northern Bicycle Trail and Elkhorn Boulevard.
- The **multi-use and equestrian trails**, adjacent but separate, proceed from the Dry Creek Road crossing along the west bank of the Main Fork and then west on the north side of Elkhorn Boulevard. At the intersection with the Sacramento Northern Bicycle Trail, both trails either proceed north along the Sacramento Northern Bicycle Trail, or cross Elkhorn Boulevard. While an at-grade crossing is not optimal, it may be necessary due to the limited clearance below the Elkhorn Boulevard bridge.
- From Elkhorn Boulevard, the **paved trail** coincides both north and south with the Sacramento Northern Bicycle Trail, while the equestrian trail divides into two branches. One is adjacent to the Sacramento Northern Bike Trail and the other is adjacent to the constructed flood basin. About 1/4 mile down the Sacramento Northern Bicycle Trail, both the paved and equestrian trails split to provide the option of either crossing from the Main Fork to the North Fork or continuing south. A **multi-use crossing** is included to provide access across the Main Fork to Hayer Park. Both trails conclude at the **staging area** on Rio Linda Boulevard.
- An old combination dam and bridge, erected more than 50 years ago, is located on the Main Fork at the southerly edges of Central Park/Hayer Park. The structure is dilapidated and in need of significant repair or replacement if it is to continue functioning. Presently the dam is operated seasonally to provide water to private water-ski lakes located near the Rio Linda Airport. Sacramento County and the Rio Linda-Elverta Recreation and Park District are working with the State Department of Fish and Game and other agencies to explore various options for the dam site,

including rehabilitation or replacement, that would enhance spawning, and improve the fishery on Dry Creek.

- South of Roy E. Hayer Park is the Roy Hayer Speedway, operated by the Capital Quarter Midgets. Noise and exhaust from the speedway are considered inconsistent with passive recreation experience of Parkway trail users. Sacramento County has recently acquired ownership of this property and will be phasing out the operation of the speedway over time in coordination with the development of Parkway amenities in the area.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The Dry Creek Parkway is comprised of approximately six miles of open space and riparian corridor starting at the Sacramento/Placer County line and extending southwesterly along the two forks of Dry Creek to the Sacramento City limits at Ascot Lane (Figure 1). The Parkway passes through the unincorporated communities of Antelope, Rio Linda, and Elverta. The boundary of the Parkway encompasses the area 175' beyond of the normal top of bank for the Dry Creek channel, as well as Cherry Island Soccer Complex, Cherry Island Golf Course, Gibson Ranch, and Northbrook Park (Figure 2). Existing land uses adjacent to the Parkway are agriculture, rural residential, residential, recreation, and open space with several small commercial areas and public schools.

The Dry Creek Parkway is the last remaining major open space riparian corridor in the North County area. As such, it provides migration corridors, habitat, and forage for a wide variety of aquatic and terrestrial wildlife, including rare, threatened, and endangered species. In terms of overall biological productivity and richness, the riparian habitat within the Dry Creek Parkway compares favorably with the riparian habitat found on the American River Parkway.

Currently, the Dry Creek Parkway provides recreational opportunities for the surrounding communities in the form of a golf course, horse trails, picnic facilities, fishing, soccer fields, and hiking trails. The parkway represents a potentially significant addition to the linear trail corridor that currently includes the American River Parkway, the Ueda Parkway and the Sacramento Northern Bikeway. The Dry Creek Parkway could extend this corridor through northern Sacramento County to the Placer County line. The Dry Creek Parkway could also provide connections to a variety of other existing and planned County trail linkages in the Natomas, Rio Linda, Elverta, North Highlands, and Foothill Farms communities.

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The EIR will analyze the relative aspects of the Dry Creek Parkway Recreation Master Plan, which is a policy document that establishes the planning framework for the future design, implementation, and management of the Dry Creek Parkway. Potential environmental effects will be analyzed at a policy level and not at a project specific level. It is anticipated that the topical areas most affected by the policies for the management of

the Dry Creek Parkway will involve land use, agricultural resources, aesthetics, public services, public safety, noise, hydrology/flooding, biological resources, and cultural resources.

ALTERNATIVES

The boundary of the Parkway encompasses the area 175' beyond the normal top of bank for the Dry Creek channel, as well as Cherry Island Soccer Complex, Cherry Island Golf Course, Gibson Ranch, and Northbrook Park. The origin of the 175-foot buffer came from the County General Plan. Dry Creek was identified on the Open Space Preservation Map in the General Plan Conservation Element (page 71), as an Urban Stream Corridor. County policy CO-117 suggests a transition zone adjacent to a stream corridor to include up to a 150-foot natural buffer and a 20-foot fire break with sufficient additional width for other activities (Channel maintenance, flood control and passive recreation). Thus the 175-foot area was based on the General Plan concepts and in the absence of the Dry Creek Parkway and specific mapping of the riparian area for Dry Creek. This Parkway boundary is coincidental with the boundary proposed in the original, but incomplete, Master Plan in the early 1990's. The boundary is inclusive of all recreational elements identified within the proposed Master Plan area.

Two alternatives will be considered in the Draft EIR. These are expanding the Plan area to encompass the 100-year floodplain boundary of Dry Creek; and expanding the boundary to the 200-year floodplain boundary of Dry Creek.

Land Use

Land use impacts and consistency with the Sacramento County General Plan, the Sacramento County Zoning Code, the Rio Linda/Elverta Community Plan, the City of Sacramento, and other applicable plans will be determined.

Agricultural Resources

A limited amount of agricultural activities still occurs within the parkway. The Parkway Master Plan will be analyzed for its compatibility with agricultural activities and vice versa.

Aesthetics

Naturally formed and undeveloped riparian areas are seen as attractive sites for people to recreate and build. The pleasant look of a meandering creek and ample amounts of shade from large trees all contribute toward the popularity of this type of habitat. Impacts would come about when a project would substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. The Parkway Master Plan will be analyzed for its compatibility with aesthetics issues.

Public Services

The proposed Master Plan will be analyzed for its compatibility with public services and requirements to serve the proposed uses.

Public Safety/Nuisance Impacts

The proposed Master Plan will be analyzed for its effect on public safety. Issues such as emergency vehicle access and conflicts between uses will be addressed.

Noise

Potential noise conflicts might occur due to facilities placed close to residential areas. The EIR will address potential noise impacts from the Parkway and upon the Parkway.

Hydrology/Flooding

Nearly the entire Parkway is located within the 100-year floodplain, and much of the Parkway is subject to flooding in a 10-year storm event. Serious floods on Dry Creek, accompanied by property damage have occurred several times.

Because floods are a natural occurrence within the parkway all proposed activities and structures within the parkway would be analyzed for their compatibility with local flooding. Agencies involved with flood control issues will be consulted. These include, but are not limited to: the California State Department of Water Resources, the State Reclamation Board, the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency (SAFCA), and the Sacramento County Department of Water Resources. Current flood management of the area will be discussed and any impacts resulting from the Master Plan will be addressed.

Biology

Biological resources will be analyzed to identify impacts to resources in the area. Mitigation measures will be suggested as appropriate and consistent with local, state and federal policies.

Cultural/Historical Resources

Riparian areas are known to be historically active sites where early peoples and settlers would have obtained fresh water, hunted, gathered foods, and placed buildings. Given the sensitivity of the area, the Master Plan will be analyzed for its compatibility with cultural and historical resources.

Other Studies

Other studies may be required including the following:

- Traffic
- Parking
- Hazardous Materials

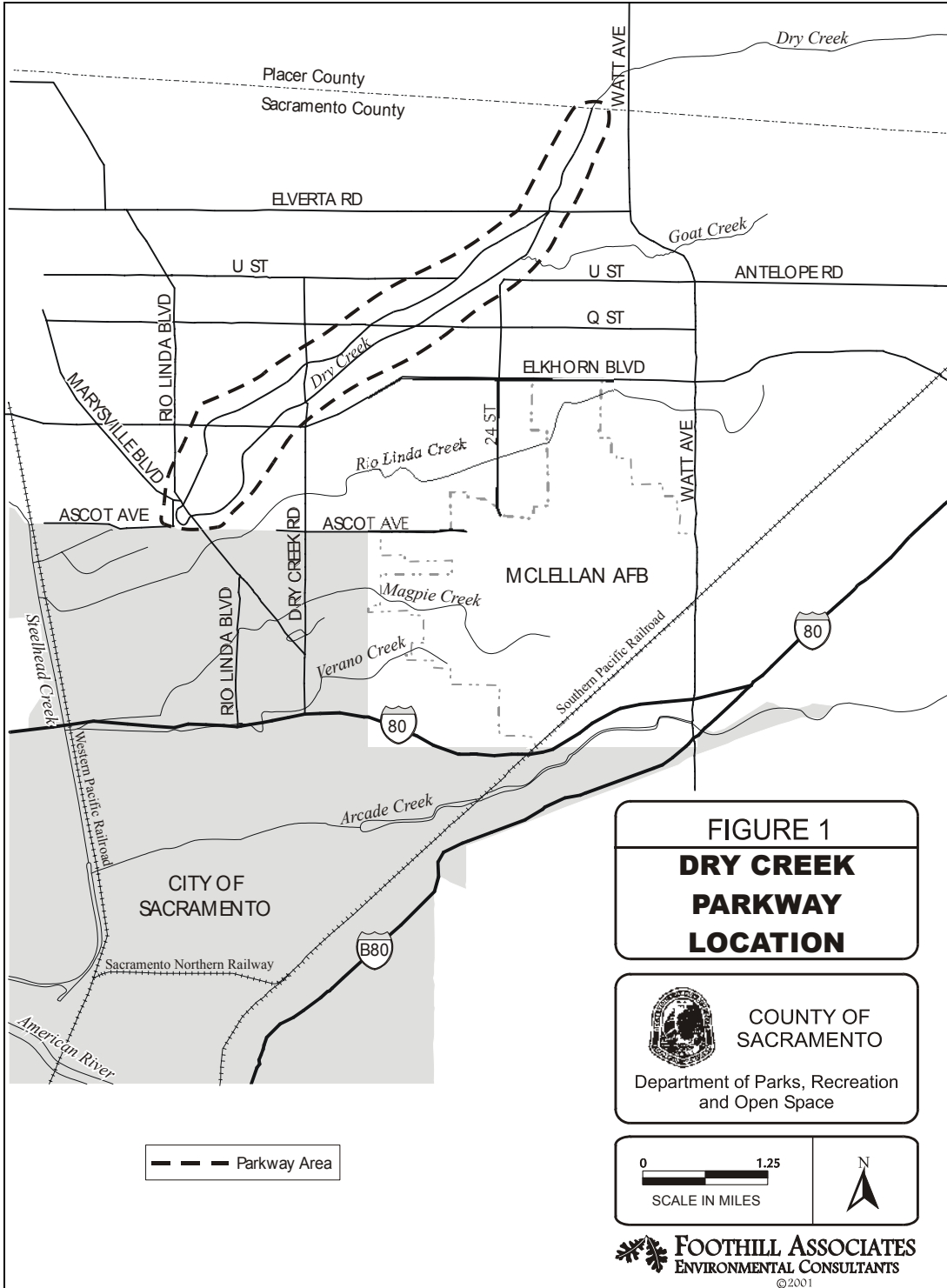


Figure 1 - Dry Creek Parkway Location

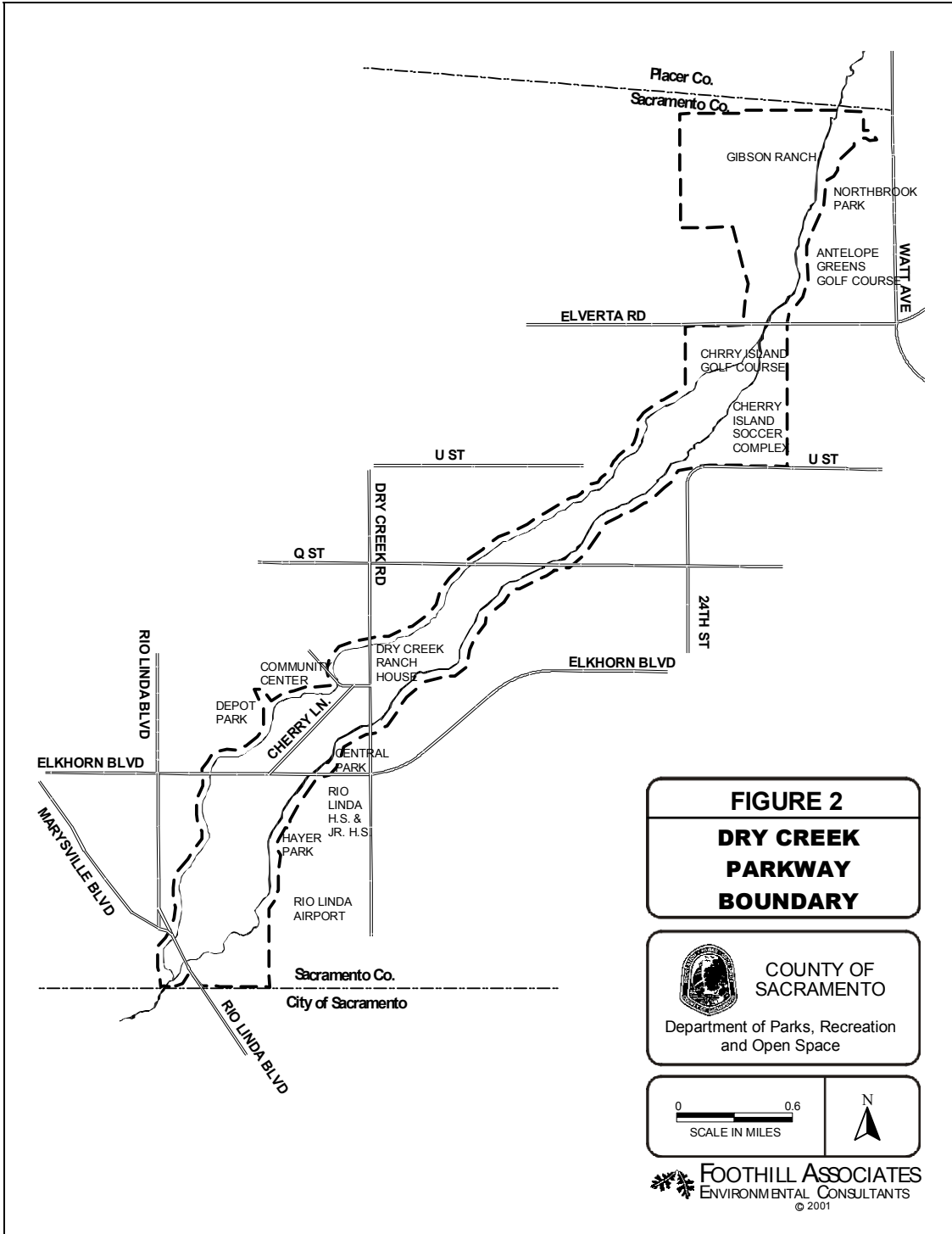
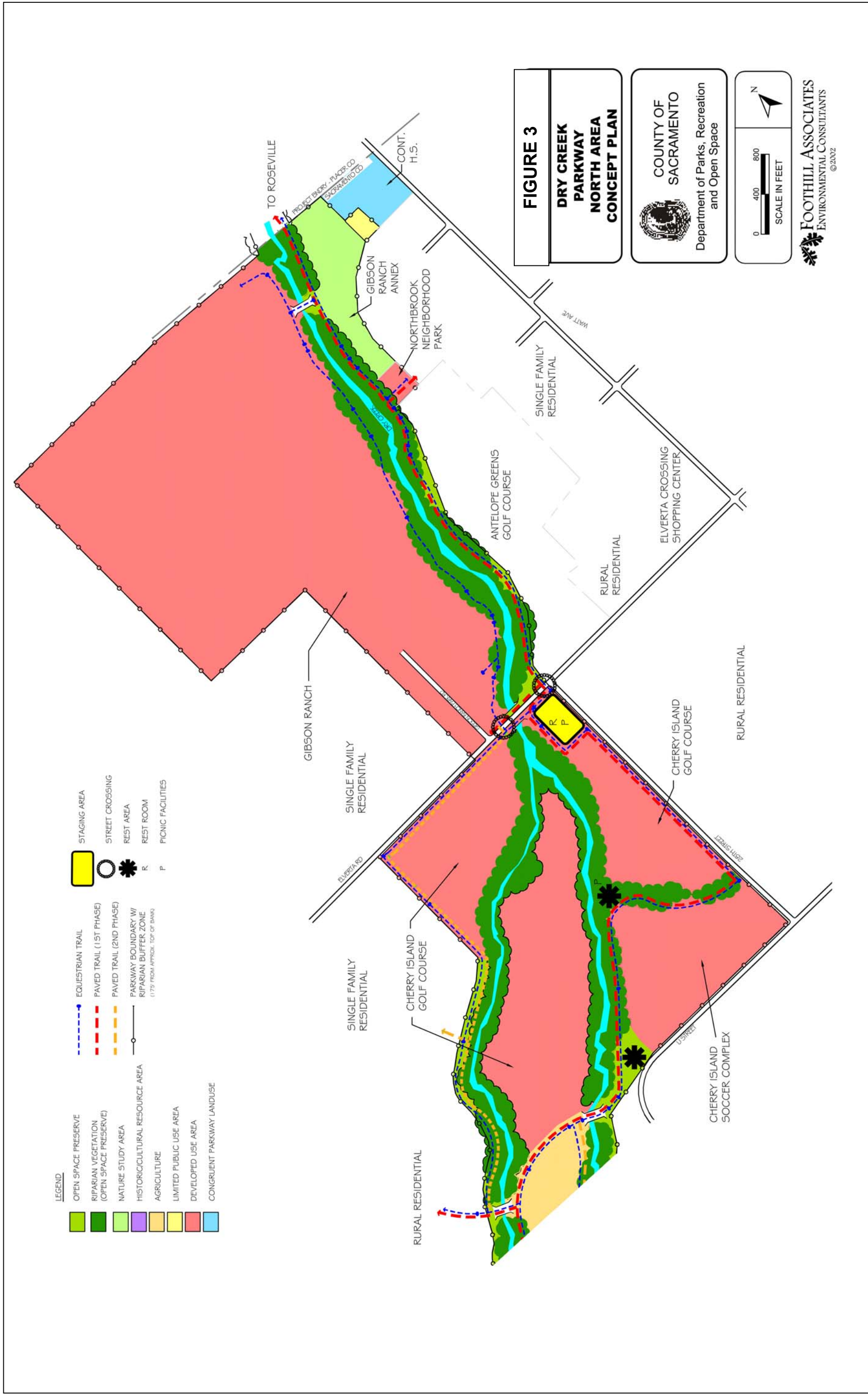


Figure 2 - Dry Creek Parkway Boundary



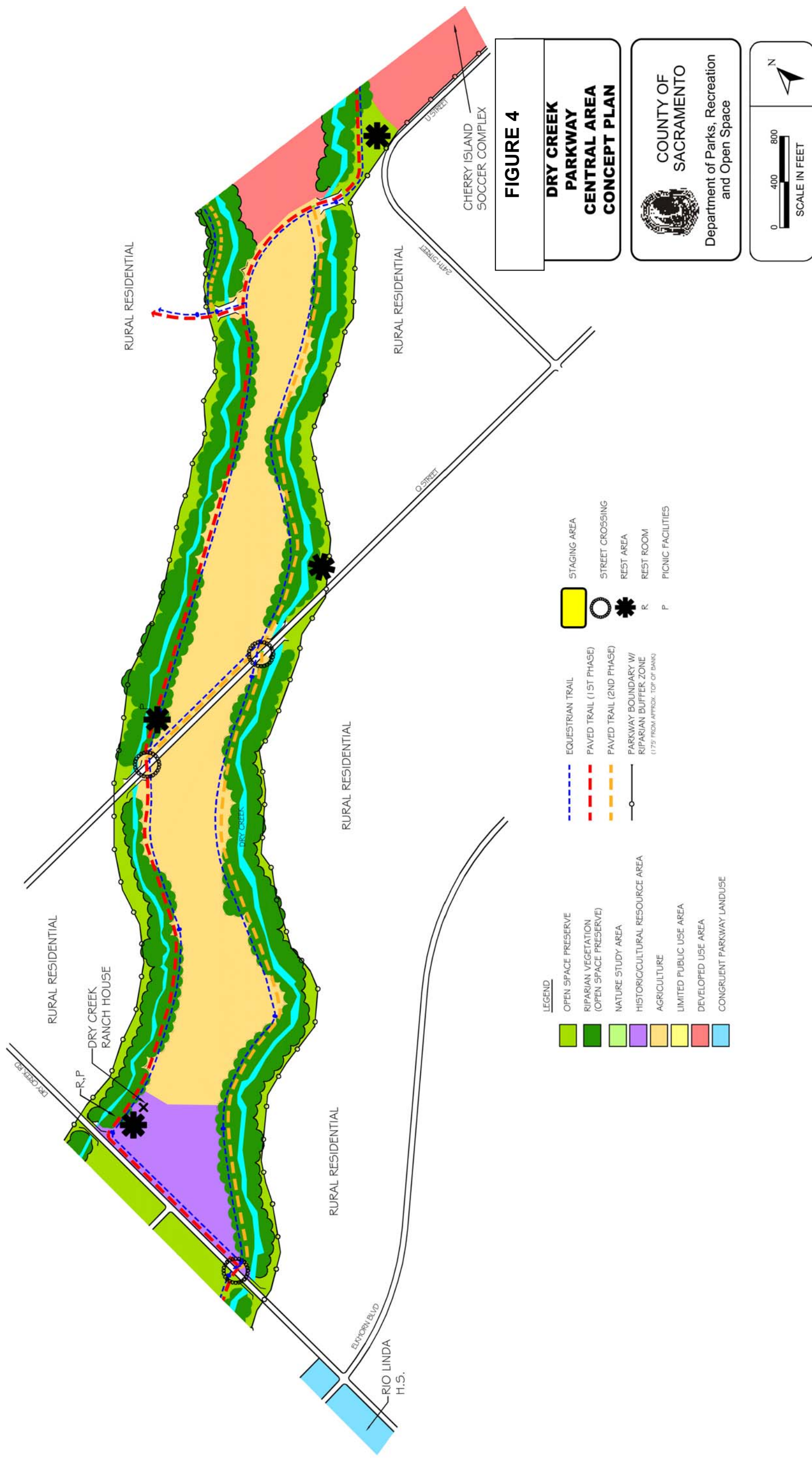


FIGURE 4

**DRY CREEK
PARKWAY
CENTRAL AREA
CONCEPT PLAN**

**COUNTY OF
SACRAMENTO**
Department of Parks, Recreation
and Open Space

0 400 800
SCALE IN FEET

N

- STAGING AREA
- STREET CROSSING
- REST AREA
- REST ROOM
- PICNIC FACILITIES

- EQUESTRIAN TRAIL
- PAVED TRAIL (1ST PHASE)
- PAVED TRAIL (2ND PHASE)
- PARKWAY BOUNDARY W/
RIPARIAN BUFFER ZONE
(175' FROM APPROX. TOP OF BANK)

- LEGEND**
- OPEN SPACE PRESERVE
 - RIPARIAN VEGETATION
(OPEN SPACE PRESERVE)
 - NATURE STUDY AREA
 - HISTORIC/CULTURAL RESOURCE AREA
 - AGRICULTURE
 - LIMITED PUBLIC USE AREA
 - DEVELOPED USE AREA
 - CONGRUENT PARKWAY LANDUSE

