

# **KERN RIVER VALLEY SPECIFIC PLAN**

## **Community Workshop**

### **January 12, 2005**

On January 12, 2005, over 100 Kern River Valley residents gathered to participate in a Kern River Valley Specific Plan Community Workshop held at Lake Isabella Veterans Hall. Participants were presented with the following event objectives:

- Ensure that County staff and consultants have correctly interpreted the main issues identified by the community.
- Provide community-based solutions for the issues identified.
- Review some of the key findings of background reports.
- Discuss opportunities and constraints prior to development of Specific Plan policies.

The format for the event was an open house. Participants were invited to visit each of six interactive stations dealing with issues like land use, economic development/tourism, circulation and public facilities, open space/conservation, community safety, and design guidelines.

The following pages present a summary of the written comments presented by attendees.

If you have any additional comments please send them to:

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## **Land Use**

- Limit further development and subdivision of large parcels. No subdivisions below 20 acres on ranching lands
- Plenty of smaller vacant lots are available.
- Dredge sand west of Kern Valley Airport for expansion. – Use nearby soil for fill needed to expand runway.
- Lots on Sierra Way – Zoning should remain as is.
- Lost northeast of Weldon – 20 acre minimum now, would like to consider 2 ½ acre.
- Suggest that upon major repair, power lines get put under ground.
- Property owner adjoining wildlife preserve:
  - Sedimentation is a systemic problem in the South Fork
  - Need channelization of the South Fork through the habitat preserve to the lake to restore and maintain the channel.
- This Specific Plan will be surrounded by government land...
  - It will only apply to private landowners
  - There should be more private land here – population is decreasing
  - More development opportunity should exist on available private land – we need less restrictive zoning.
- Public easements should be created to allow access to the River.

- Do not expand the airport. Improve the present facility and advertise car rentals and services to Kernville.
- Can County prohibit conservation easements to organizations that pay no taxes and reduce the tax base?
- Need additional industrial lands to promote economic growth and jobs.
- Residential uses are currently in conflict with the Airport.
- Need an engineering/hydrologic study of South Fork – consider channelization.
  - Blocked natural secondary floodplain with trees/obstructions that block floodwaters.
  - Should be specific action and implementation in Specific Plan to deal with this and work with other agencies to address.
- Need to get drainage channels through habitat area
- Health and safety problems occur because of over sedimentation – leads to flooding and vector problems
- Expanding the airport is a mistake:
  - Noise – Interim report describes a noisier class of aircraft
  - Will increase aircraft noise over Kernville
  - Needs more sound studies
- Sierra Way can't be considered "scenic" with power lines the way they are today.
- Use conservation easements on ranch lands to allow fair compensation – compensate ranch and farm owners for not developing their land
- Grazing/habitat conflict – Specific Plan should define BMP's to avoid conflicts
- Need to address impacts of recreational use increases on land use, watershed, and other areas
  - Trash and sanitation
- Flooding issues on the South Fork
- Circulation impacts due to flooding potential at bridges and on private lands
- Conflicts between critical habitat designations and species preservation
- Maintain adequate flood control
  - At whose cost? Who will pay for these actions?
- Telephone and other communications services are poor here.
  - PUC regulations should require better services
- Civic Center - There may be funds available if there's a way to organize construction.
- Finish the Specific Plan before additional C or M zone changes are approved.
  - Do these zone changes in context with other planning.
- Cerro Coso College – Allow for development of a permanent campus.
  - Keep flexible zoning for this
- Watershed management
  - Purify air by actively managing forest so trees are healthy and can scrub the air
- Both native and invasive species serve as habitat.
- What benefits are gained by using native vs. non-native species?
- Set aside additional open lands for parks – preserve grazing lands and forested areas
- Conserve open spaces
- Concern about illegal OHV operations – leading to erosion and destruction of private property.
- Mitigate frivolous lawsuits, e.g: area adjacent. to McDonald's - project was designed sensitive to community originally – suit on environmental document changed everything.
- Consideration of development projects beyond the canyon mouth toward Bakersfield and impact on SR-178 other roads – need improvements to SR-178.

## Economic Development and Tourism

- Problems with trash along river and in recreation areas
- Enforce laws on the books to keep KRV nice (more enforcement officers)
- Spanish-language signs are needed
- Camping everywhere – need more campgrounds – RV facilities needed to camp
- Need littering signs (no littering) in local parks and elsewhere to help with enforcement
- OHV area behind landfill – make this more used and noticeable to the public
- County fee – paid dry storage and boat launch (pay to launch)
- We like passive recreation – not really all the OHVs and camping
- Plant more fish in the river/lakes off season for year round tourism
- Use County property to enhance recreation/tourism:
  - Info kiosks
  - Walkways
  - Theater in round
- Lake levels should be more constant year round
- OHV activity in Plan
  - Why is it in plan as only destructive?
  - Opportunity exists for recreational tourism with OHV/off road activity. (2004 June – sequoia – national/visitor use monitoring – OHV – funding that comes in from OHV – National Forest/Greensticker – tourism)
- What makes an activity *passive*?
- What does *sustainable* mean?
- Don't close too many recreation areas for use by OHV, hikers, horses – These areas will not be over used.
- Expand facilities that cater to year-round tourism – i.e., increase the golf course to 18 holes.
- Hunting:
  - Viable year round
  - Need more advertising, but make sure its in non populated areas
  - Enforce or include no shooting areas – see naturealley.org
- Detraction of man made things (power lines, signs, fences) hinders photographic opportunities (view shed)
- Power poles are a detractor to photographic quality of Valley
- Maintain archaeological sites on both public and private lands
- Like in Salton Sea – put in dike to separate the flycatcher area, so lake can fill behind/in front of the dike.
- Discourage tourism
- Limit development in the South Fork area
- Prevent developers from subdividing rural lands for new development
- We need a performing arts/town hall facility.
- Establish a Dinner Train around Lake Isabella
- Build a townhall /performing arts facility in Kernville!
- Learn from the example of La Conchita – Prevent over-development of hillsides.
- Use existing campgrounds/parks for public gatherings/performance space.
- Create Redevelopment Agency to increase tax base and improve image/remove blight
- Free public camping on State lands adjacent. to Lake Isabella should remain that way – don't charge fees. This is good for fishing, boating, camping.
- Promote of Cyrus Canyon Motocross track events.

## **Circulation and Public Facilities**

- Edison canal maintenance roads should be maintained as trails below the auxiliary dam
- “No littering” signs are needed at Riverside park
- A 50 mph sign is needed at Canebrake Creek hairpin
- Bike lanes are needed
- Prescriptive right trails needed
- Underground utilities
- We need a valley wide sewer system – With continuing growth, septic systems will contaminate ground water
- Turnouts are needed along county roads for tourists, and photographers, along with signs to explain what a turnout is. Right and Left Turn lanes needed at cross streets along county roads to prevent rear end collisions
- Bike lanes needed:
  - Between Lake Isabella and Bodfish
  - To Johnsondale.
  - Around Lake Isabella
  - In towns
- Enforce 35 mph speed limits in Kernville
- Widen the canyon road for safety (by blasting more mountain away)
- Do not build a 4 lane freeway.... There is no infrastructure to handle more people.
- No 4-lane highway through the canyon!!!!

## **Open Space and Conservation**

- Consider Engineer’s Point as a venue for amphitheatre/outdoor activities
- Underground utilities – both existing and new (safety, scenic and open space issues)
- Use conservation easements and transfer of development rights to preserve open space
- Recognize reduced value of conservation easements – re-assess to lower taxes
- Discuss impacts of use of land with open space designations (carrying capacity of open space lands)
- Address increased fuel loads in wildlife areas (fire hazard)
- Develop a fire plan
- Address non-point pollution sources related to increased activity along river (trash and sanitation)
- Open space/wetlands/meadows act as filtration systems to preserve groundwater quality (including agricultural operations)
- Periodic flooding of open space and protection and maintenance of river channel – all stakeholders should participate
- City of Bakersfield (through Cal Water) is using Kern River water (water rights issues). SWP trades are not acceptable
- Maintain agricultural lands
- Focus on benefits and common ground between grazing and agriculture with habitat conservation, sediment and floodplain management. Look at benefits of these practices. Currently listed as a constraint but could be looked at as opportunity
- New development should pay fair share (especially for infrastructure). Need development fees for this area
- Hunting opportunities should be enhanced to promote good land stewardship and protection

- Identify OHV (other trails) connections between designated trails (public to private to public) (identify access easements)
- No development allowed on hilltops – preserve scenic views – development on hillsides
- Develop a multi-use trail around the lake (on- and off highway)
- Develop trail loops for non-motorized scenic/wildlife viewing
- Better “no hunting” signage in conservation areas
- Save fish hatchery (especially for native fish program)
- Redesignate a portion of N. Fork Kern as wild trout fishery
- “Youth Power” to assist with conservation projects (boy scouts, kids club etc.)
- Use volunteers for non-native species removal
- There is enough open space in KRV – no more is needed
- Adopt a dark sky ordinance
- Reduce non-native species (develop a program to do this)
- No science re: grazing = *high coliform FM upper watershed high coliform fork* – no grazing
- Disclose SWP water trades with City of Bakersfield. Need greater depth water study – Look at available resources – self support
- Encourage a trail around the lake
- Trail around lake should be kept as level as possible, for case of use by the majority of people. It would also allow kids to use it to go from one area to another, also mothers with baby carriages.
- Community center/conservation center needed
- Only 2 forest wardens for 2 districts; only 2 game wardens exist
- Teen-activities needed – midnight basketball
- Litter, illegal camping, trespassing, illegal trails – OHV illegal fires, graffiti on rocks/boulders
- 18-hole golf course – in Lake Isabella across from Vons – Preserve open space
- Try to get more drinking water supply from surface water sources – Kern River and Lake Isabella are relatively clean sources, with treatment.

## Community Safety

- Fire safety – more stringent requirements for builders to use steel stud and fire resistant siding
  - Improvement of water systems over 5 acre site – 2,500-5,000 gas tanks
  - Road improvements/Turn-arounds – 10'-15' width required for emergency access
- Speeding in Kernville – Need traffic calming to increase visibility of commercial development
  - North Tahoe has examples that could be looked at
- Signs needed on or near Lake Isabella warning of hazards such as submerged trees, sand bars, fences and channels
- Emergency evacuation – a “whole valley” evacuation scenario doesn’t exist – so don’t use as a reason to make SR-178 through Kern River Canyon four lanes
- Use more turnouts for passing on roads, i.e. SR-178
- Commuters accept occasional road closures – rural character is part of why we live here
- Maintain rural character by keeping access “difficult”- windy roads.
- Promote strategic water storage concepts – 200,000 acres of water in the lake will solve hazards in Lake problems listed above – will also eliminate sand and dust that are blown off the lake, given low water levels. Sand storms are not only health hazards (ask the folks who are told to stay inside), but also driving hazards.
- More pavement = more runoff = flooding
- South Fork flooding – Sierra Way, Fay Ranch Road bridges impacted

- Airport safety
  - Nighttime landings are unsafe
  - Extension of runway would allow bigger jets in the Valley.
- Vector control and mosquito abatement
  - West Nile and Encephalitis district should be established
  - No spraying for mosquitoes in wildlife areas
  - Vector control has become a health and safety issue.
- Disseminate of news in case of disaster/emergency on media other than radio
- Develop a community watch program
- Bike paths around Isabella – Bikers (local) need to take ownership of litter problem
- Landslides – Adequate groundcover could prevent landslides

## **Design Guidelines**

- Eco-friendly design with all land uses
  - Solar
  - Wind
  - Straw bale
- Light Pollution
  - Eliminate light pollution
  - No insane lights.
  - If high candlepower lights are used (i.e. halogen, mercury, etc) mandate them to be shielded or motion activated.
  - Preserve night skies.
  - Keep our dark skies dark
- Xeriscape landscape issues – Drought and fire resistant plantings
- Landscape with native trees and drought & heat resistant flowers – not with cement.
- Focus funding & zoning to encourage renewal in “mini-urban” areas in Lake Isabella & other towns. Redevelop and improve “blighted” areas. (urban renewal)
- Implement a design committee. Projects should have public review
- Plants should, at the very least, be drought tolerant, in commercial and residential areas. There is no water to support riparian plants in desert areas
- Eco-friendly design should be encouraged by some sort of cost savings, permit costs, etc.
- Any type of education re: sustainable architecture and native plants would be welcome and well attended.
- Businesses that renovate should conform to new standards.
- Use monument signs
- Obtain community approval for new construction and remodeling of old structures via a board or committee.
- Preserve rural character by making small parking lots within “town center” shopping areas. (i.e. no strip malls)