
5.14 - Parks and Recreation

5.14.1 - Introduction

This section of the Draft EIR discusses how the North Fork Village I (NFV-1) development and associated population increase will affect the demand for recreational facilities and services. This section also describes the recreational resources within the project area and assesses the significance of such resources. Base data information for this section was taken from the NFV-1 Specific Plan and the Rio Mesa Area Plan (RMAP).

Rio Mesa Area Plan and EIR

The Rio Mesa Area Plan provides for the establishment of the San Joaquin River Parkway Trail, bike trails, hiking trails and activity centers. The plan also establishes major open space areas as well as neighborhood and community parkland and both active and passive parks. The RMAP includes a standard of three acres of improved community parkland per one thousand population. The RMAP EIR found that cumulative impacts to existing recreational resources would be significant due to the increased number of people using recreational resources and open spaces.

5.14.2 - Existing Conditions

The County of Madera owns and maintains one park facility located in the City of Madera across from the County Government Center. Currently, Madera County does not have a Parks and Recreation Department. The County General Plan establishes a standard of three acres of Public Park for every 1,000 population and encourages private recreation facilities to offset the heavy demand of other public recreation facilities. There are several recreation areas within Madera County that include Bass Lake, Hensley Lake, Eastman Lake, and several local parks.

Millerton Lake State Recreation Area (SRA) lies adjacent to the NVR-1 Project along the shore of Millerton Lake. According to the California State Park System 2004/2005 Statistical Report, the Millerton Lake SRA includes day-use areas, 211 individual camp sites, 6 group camp sites, 211 individual picnic sites, and 2 group picnic sites. It also has a campfire center, a boat launch facility and riding and hiking trails. The park is open year round and includes restroom and shower facilities. The annual patronage of the park in 2004/2005 was 264,778 paid day-use, 6,105 free day-use and 49,410 camping uses for a total 340,293 visitors.

The NFV-1 Specific Plan provides for public recreation and parks. The plan will develop a park like setting between designated parks and open space; other areas will maintain the natural vegetation of the area. The NFV-1 Specific Plan's Land Use Plan describes the development of 23 acres of Open Space - Parks, which include public recreation area with playing fields and hiking and biking trails adjacent to the recreation area which will connect to other trails within the plan. A public recreation area is proposed in the northern section of the South Mesa Neighborhood within the trail/greenbelt/recreation area along Cottonwood Creek. The NFV-1 Specific Plan provides for a

private recreational area that could include uses such as swimming pools, spas, basketball courts, tot lots, tennis courts, volleyball courts, and recreation rooms.

5.14.3 - Thresholds of Significance

Significant impacts that could occur were determined from criteria in the CEQA Guidelines. Based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines and other agency standards, the County has determined that a project will normally have a significant impact on Parks and Recreation if it will:

- a) Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated.
- b) Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.

5.14.4 - Project Impacts

Impact 5.14-1: Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated. (Threshold a.)

The proposed NFV-1 is anticipated to add 8,899 people to the County's population at full buildout after 2030. Using 3 acres per 1,000 residents ratio, yields a need for 26.7 acres of parks. The increased population will increase the usage of the current public recreational facilities in approximately the same proportion as the increase in the County's population. The County's population in 2030 assuming 3 percent annual growth will be over 300,000. Thus, the 8,899 persons will be approximately 3 percent of the County's total population, and it can be assumed that use of existing recreational facilities will be likewise increased by the proposed project.

Additionally, the use of Millerton Lake SRA will increase as a result of the project. It is likely that residents of the proposed project will take advantage of the boat launch and other facilities such as the campfire center, picnic facilities and beaches. If all 8,899 persons in the project visited the park three times per year, it would result in 26,697 visitors or about 7.8 percent of the existing patronage of 340,293. However, this level of use will be offset by payment of SRA day use fees, as with current patrons of the park. Such fees are used to maintain SRA facilities so that no substantial physical deterioration of facilities would occur.

The NFV-1 Specific Plan includes a variety of open space, park and recreational facilities that will off-set the increased use of existing facilities. The Land Use table for the Specific Plan is a land use overlay including 34 acres for Community Facilities inclusive of recreation centers, and 18 acres for Open Space Parks. This is sufficient acreage to assure that the 26.7 acres of required park is fulfilled. Nevertheless, mitigation is provided to assure that this standard is met.

Additionally, of the entire 2,238 acres contained within the NFV-1 Specific Plan, approximately 1,117 net acres (50 percent) will be retained as open space lands. Open space lands include parks,

irrigated landscaped use areas, revegetated areas, open space preserves, and natural, undisturbed lands.

A linear greenbelt, a trail, a public recreation area, and open space lands will be located adjacent to Cottonwood Creek. This open space will contain a mix of passive and active recreational areas, as well as riparian vegetation and natural open space. The public recreation area will contain athletic playing fields, trails, and restroom facilities. Access to this linear belt will be available from Rio Mesa Boulevard.

A public recreation area, which includes athletic playing fields, is proposed for the northern section of South Mesa Neighborhood within the trail, greenbelt, and recreation area along Cottonwood Creek. This recreation area will be easily accessible from the adjacent mixed-use and multi-family residential development. A public hiking and biking trail will be incorporated adjacent to the recreation area and will connect with other regional trails, on-street bicycle lanes, and sidewalks.

A trail system will be designed to loop through each Neighborhood within the Specific Plan. The overall trail system shall be designed to link with the San Joaquin River Parkway trail adjacent to the San Joaquin River, and with the California State Park Trail system along the north shore of Lake Millerton.

The Cottonwood Creek Trail will pass through the 9.4-acre sports park located adjacent to Cottonwood Creek to form a community-oriented recreation area, which may contain restroom facilities, athletic playing fields, lawn bowling, and basketball courts. The recreation area will be easily accessible from both the mixed-use development and the multi-family residential uses in South Mesa Neighborhood, Central Park Neighborhood and South Creek Neighborhoods.

Neighborhood parks will be located within the residential and mixed-use land use designations, providing day-to-day recreational amenities to community residents. Neighborhood parks are a minimum of two (2) acres and sized to minimize overall maintenance and service costs. Some of the neighborhood parks may be combined to provide a larger recreational site.

Community park sites are intended to provide an expanded recreational dimension to the NFV-1 community and are located in or adjacent to other open space areas to maximize recreational uses. Community Parks are also accessed by the bike and pedestrian trail network.

A community center with clubhouse facilities, including tennis courts, a swimming pool, and other amenities is planned on a 14.6-acre parcel within Central Park Neighborhood along Rio Mesa Boulevard.

Multi-family developments are required by this Specific Plan to provide private recreational areas and facilities for the use of project residents and their guests, unless this requirement is waived during the

Design Review process. These recreational areas and facilities may include swimming pools, spas, basketball courts, tot lots, tennis courts, volleyball courts, and recreation rooms.

A community clubhouse and related accessory facilities including a day spa, tennis courts, and a swimming pool are planned for the Oak Ranch Neighborhood. In addition to the clubhouse, a 10.5-acre community park will be located near the Lake Millerton SRA entrance.

Accommodations will be made to link the trail system that runs throughout the Specific Plan to the State Park Trail system along the shores of Lake Millerton and the San Joaquin River. Along with these elements, a large portion of natural open space will comprise the rest of Oak Ranch. A public access recreation trail shall be provided along the southern edge of Rio Mesa Boulevard, adjacent to the 10.5-acre park and shall link Sierra Crest Neighborhood to Lake Ridge Neighborhood. The trail shall continue to the northeast from the park and shall be designed as a natural open space trail.

The primary community recreation center has been designated on the Land Use Plan as a land use overlay. The primary community recreation center is located adjacent to Cottonwood Creek along the backbone collector road for the development. A secondary community recreation center may be placed northwest of Friant Dam. Community recreations centers are provided to serve as common meeting places for the community as well as offer specific health and wellness benefits to residents.

A private community recreational facility is planned for construction within Central Park Neighborhood and shall be made available to all residents living within the NFV-1 Specific Plan. The private recreational facilities shall be equipped with a weight training facility, swimming pools, and athletic courts. The intent is to create a facility that will encourage residents living within the Specific Plan Area to exercise and interact with one another. At the same time, this facility may serve as a larger community sharing facility, capable of hosting parties, weddings and other events.

In consideration of the additional recreational amenities that will be provided by the proposed project to serve both the County population and the population of the project, impacts to existing recreational facilities are less than significant.

Impact 5.14-2: Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment. (Threshold b.)

The proposed project includes the development of additional recreational facilities as discussed above. The development of park and recreation facilities to serve the project is anticipated in the NFV-1 Specific Plan. The impacts of such facilities on the physical environment will occur largely within the NFV-1 development area itself. No other substantial recreational facility impacts would occur.

5.14.5 - Cumulative Impacts

The RMAP EIR found that cumulative impacts to existing recreational resources would be significant due to the increased number of people using recreational resources and open spaces. The added population and their close proximity will increase the usage of Millerton Lake SRA.

5.14.6 - Mitigation Measures

Rio Mesa Area Plan and EIR

The proposed Rio Mesa Area Plan puts forth goals and policies which when implemented, will serve to mitigate direct impacts to recreational and open space resources to less-than-significant levels. In addition, the Area Plan will create a beneficial impact on recreational and open space resources by providing additional recreational opportunities.

1. Development within the Rio Mesa Area Plan and along the San Joaquin River will be required to provide not less than four (4) trail connections to the San Joaquin River between Friant Dam and the SR 41 bridge. The precise location of these trail connections will be determined during the development stages of the Area Plan, and approved by the County of Madera.

The NFV-1 Specific Plan implements this measure by creating an opportunity to extend a planned Cottonwood Creek trail to the San Joaquin River.

Additional Project Mitigation Measures

The additional recreational facilities provided in the proposed project will reduce project impacts to Public Recreation and Parks to less than significant. In addition, the following mitigation is provided.

- PR-1** The Development Agreement for the NFV-1 Specific Plan shall include provisions to assure that 3 acres of useable, active park space is provided for every 1,000 residents inhabiting the project site.
- PR-2** Prior to recordation of the first Final Map, the project shall prepare and submit to the County RMA a Master Parks and Open Space Landscape Plan, identifying the placement and acreages of all public parks and recreational facilities planned for the NFV-1 project, including linkages to community trails. A maintenance plan shall be included, specifying responsibilities for public parks and major open space areas.

5.14.7 - Level of Significance After Mitigation

The mitigation measures provided will assure that adequate recreational space is provided for project residents and that existing recreational facilities are well maintained. However, cumulative impacts to recreational facilities including Millerton Lake SRA will remain significant after mitigation.

