

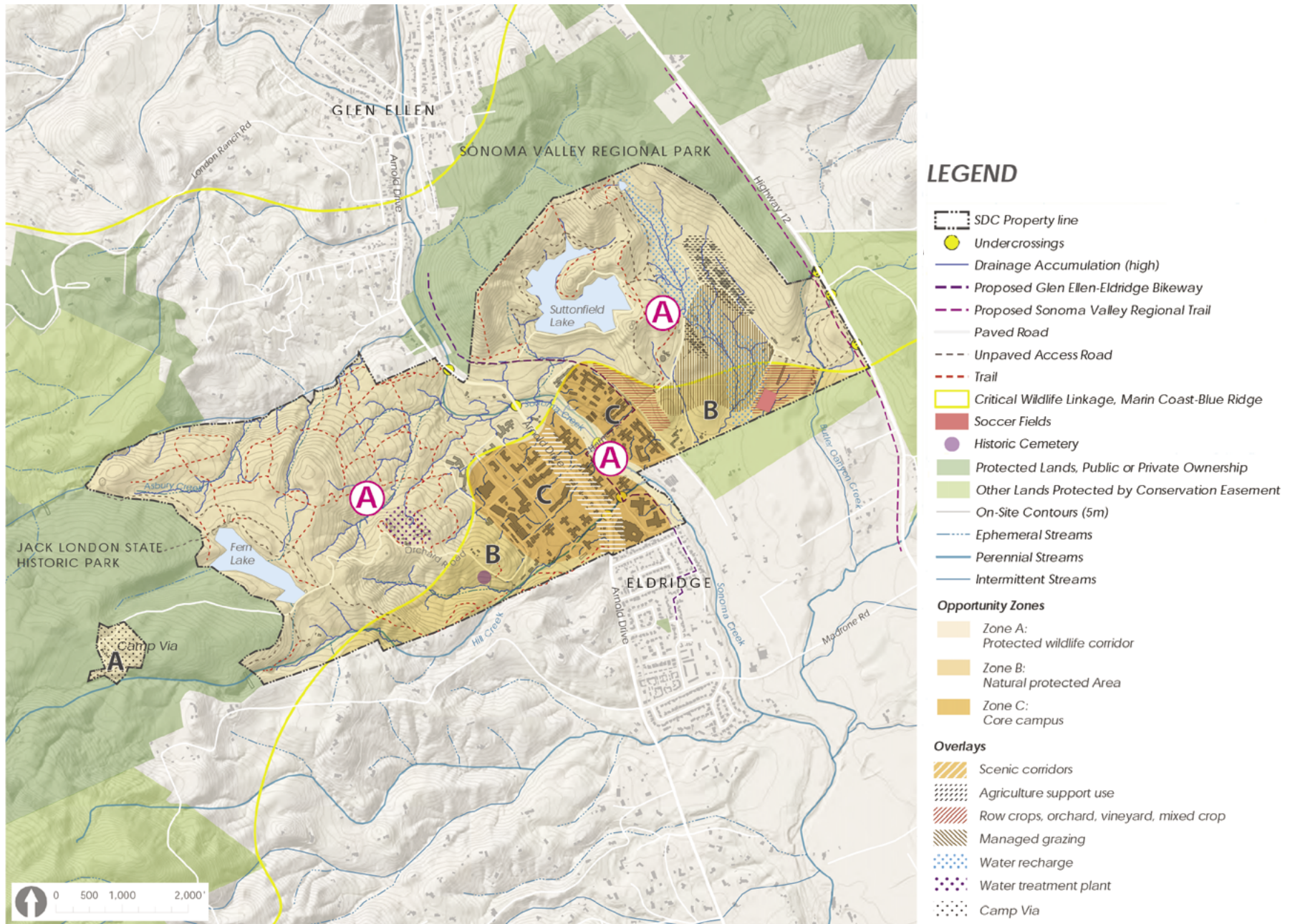


SDC COALITION LAND COMMITTEE

Land and Water Protection Proposal

February 2019

SONOMA DEVELOPMENTAL CENTER PROPOSED LAND PROTECTION ZONES (ZONES A & B)



Map excerpted from PowerPoint presentation produced by Wallace Roberts Todd for the June 23 2018 "Sonoma Developmental Center—Existing Conditions Report Community Workshop" <https://transformsdcenter.files.wordpress.com/2018/06/sdc-community-workshop-june-23-2018.pdf>



We envision the permanent protection of SDC's open space lands, water resources, and diverse natural habitats.

I. SONOMA DEVELOPMENTAL CENTER PROPERTY

The Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) property contains about 900 acres of the largest and most significant unprotected land area in the Sonoma Valley. With its span from mountain slope to floodplain, diversity of habitats, and key location as a wildlife corridor, the SDC property is central to sustaining the ecological integrity of Sonoma Valley and the greater North Bay.



II. VISION

The open space lands, water resources, and diverse natural habitats on the Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) property are permanently protected for people and wildlife. The land sustains habitat connectivity for native plant and wildlife species, allows for increased groundwater recharge for the Sonoma Valley, and moderates the effects of climate change on our region. The property is the permanent greenbelt/community separator between Sonoma and Glen Ellen, with opportunities for compatible recreational activities and sustainable agriculture.

Our vision for protection includes the following conservation priorities and uses:

- Ecological resources/biodiversity
- Water supply, both surface and groundwater
- Wildlife permeability
- Wildlife connectivity to adjacent lands
- Riparian habitat
- Wetlands
- Oak woodlands, grasslands, and mixed evergreen and redwood forests
- Special-status species
- Topographic diversity/climate change resiliency
- Scenic viewsheds
- Opportunities for low-impact recreation
- Opportunities for sustainable agriculture

III. GOAL

A low cost/no-cost transfer of ownership of the areas outside the existing developed campus of SDC to the California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) or the Sonoma County Regional Parks Department (Regional Parks) to ensure permanent preservation.

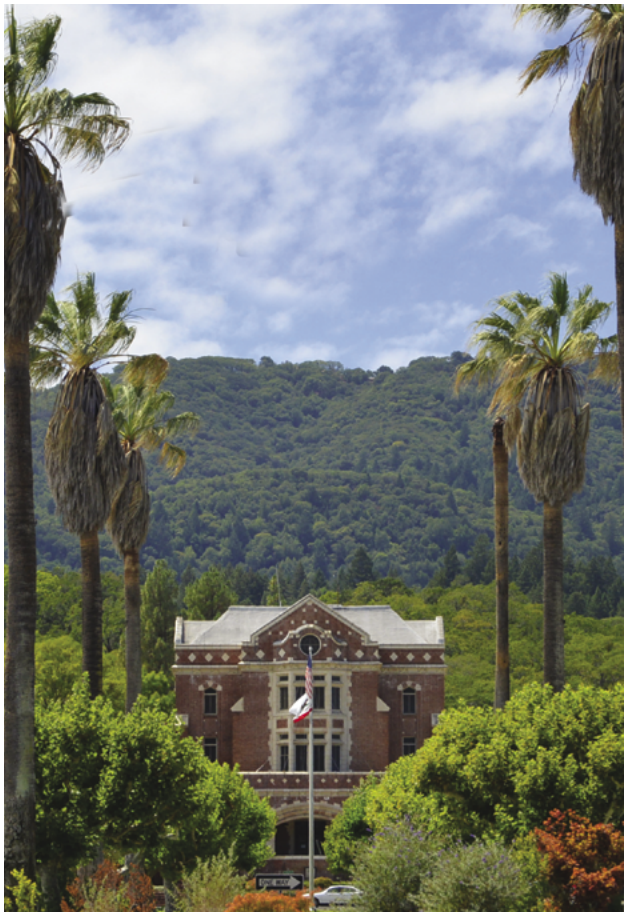
IV. LAND COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

To implement our land protection goal, the SDC Coalition Land Committee recommends:

- 1.** A no-cost interagency transfer of the primarily undeveloped western portions of the SDC property on the slopes of Sonoma Mountain to State Parks for incorporation into Jack London State Historic Park. The recommended property boundary (Zones A and B in the June 2018 WRT “Site Reuse Zones” map on page 2) is consistent with Sonoma County’s designated “Scenic Resources and Priority Greenbelt” for the Glen Ellen/ Agua Caliente community separator.
- 2.** A no-cost/low-cost transfer of the open space property between Arnold Drive and Highway 12 to either State Parks or Regional Parks for incorporation into Sonoma Valley Regional Park. Regional Parks is interested in managing an expanded park through either direct ownership or an agreement with State Parks. The recommended boundary (Zones A and B in map on page 2) is also consistent with the Glen Ellen/Agua Caliente community separator designation.
- 3.** Because we recognize the significant annual costs associated with maintaining SDC in “warm shutdown” after it closes as a residential hospital, Sonoma County and our local partners have set a goal of raising \$5 million for a conservation easement and interim funding for operations and maintenance to cost-share the successful transfer of SDC land into our public park system.

V. LOCATION OF OPEN SPACE AND NATURAL RESOURCE LANDS TO PROTECT

The map on page 2 is one of a series of maps prepared by Wallace Roberts Todd (WRT) for the June 23, 2018, community workshop summarizing the progress of the state's site assessment of SDC. Zone A (Wildlife Corridors) and Zone B (Natural Protected Area) are "Site Reuse Zones" that propose the optimal extent of land protection, and where particular conceptual uses (or "overlays") such as agriculture or recreation could be compatible. Zone C (Core Campus) is the zone where WRT recommends "new development, infill, and adaptive reuse."



VI. FUNDING FOR CONSERVATION EASEMENT AND LAND STEWARDSHIP

Because the State of California can transfer ownership and administrative control of the SDC property between state agencies, our goal is to facilitate a low-cost/no-cost transfer of 725+/- acres of open space and habitat lands into the state and local park systems.

Sonoma County Ag + Open Space and local partners such as Sonoma Land Trust and the Sonoma Ecology Center have an excellent track record of raising funds to purchase conservation easements for high-priority projects, as well as the ability to raise funding for necessary stewardship, restoration, and management costs. A conservation easement for Zones A and B would provide an additional layer of protection and guidance beyond park ownership, and a set of conservation values and use limitations that will ensure that the community's vision for the property is realized forever.

There is also precedent for this approach: In 1999, Ag + Open Space purchased an easement over 290 acres of SDC lands that were subsequently annexed into Jack London State Park (along with an additional 310 acres) in 2002. In 2007, Ag + Open Space purchased 41 acres of SDC land, immediately conveying it to Regional Parks, while retaining a conservation easement.

When Ag + Open Space purchases a conservation easement, it also has the authority to contribute funding for planning and construction of improvements that provide initial public access, as well as for the operation and maintenance of those improvements for three years. There are also other sources of potential funding (e.g., Prop. 68, the November 2018 Sonoma County parks sales tax measure, private foundations) that could serve as matching funds to put together a comprehensive fiscal strategy for successfully incorporating SDC lands into our park system.

VII. INTERIM AND LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT OF PARK AND OPEN SPACE LANDS

The “warm shutdown” of SDC creates a variety of management challenges for the state, including concerns about how to maintain and steward the nearly 700 acres of open space lands that surrounds the developed campus and are currently open for public recreational use. Sonoma County agencies and NGOs—including Sonoma County Regional Parks and Jack London Park Partners—will work with the state on cooperative management and stewardship agreements to address facility improvements, trail and recreational enhancements, rental of building space, and other efforts that will generate revenue or matching funds to keep the property safe and enjoyable for the public.

Cooperative management agreements between the state and local partners would address immediate and short-term needs—such as securing the site to prevent vandalism, theft, and other damage—in a unified approach. The agreements could also focus on the next steps of fire recovery, and engaging the community in improvement projects. Because local park and nonprofit organizations have established community-based programs on the SDC property, including these lands in the adjacent parks will be relatively smooth with limited interruptions or significant changes in public use. The cooperative management agreement would be revisited and updated upon the development of a long-term reuse plan for the property.

Cooperative management agreements
will ensure long-term stewardship and
enhancement of SDC’s open space assets.



VIII. CRITERIA FOR USE AND MANAGEMENT

When planning for the future uses of the property, the Land Committee recommends considering the following criteria in order to meet the protection goals.

Related to natural and scenic resources

WITHIN NEWLY DESIGNATED PARK AND OPEN SPACE LANDS:

- No new buildings or roads
- Remove existing buildings that have no beneficial use
- Decommission unnecessary roads
- Redesign road and trail infrastructure to minimize steep grades, protect water quality, and maximize wildlife use and movement
- Only allow emergency vehicles access from Highway 12 onto the property
- Consolidate trails to minimize impacts on wildlife movement
- Minimal use of fencing and removal of unnecessary fencing
- No night lights, except for minimal safety lighting at Camp Via
- Limited removal of native trees, except for safety and forest health



CREEK AND WETLAND BUFFERS:

- Extent of creek buffers
 - Sonoma Creek—300-foot buffer
 - Asbury, Mill/Hill, Butler Canyon—300-foot buffer (exception for Mill/Hill within the campus—100-foot buffer)
 - Tributaries to creeks—100-foot buffer
- Extent of wetland buffer
 - 100 feet from edge
- Uses within creek and wetland buffers
 - Trails
 - Grazing might be appropriate, but no cultivation (see agriculture section below)
- Structures and improvements within creek and wetland buffers
 - Same as for all designated park and open space lands
- Trails within creek and wetland buffers
 - Stay outside of creek corridors and wetlands as much as possible. Any trails should be at road level, not within the creek channel (e.g., Sonoma Creek and Arnold Drive)
 - Minimize and consolidate trails, especially within the Sonoma Creek corridor
 - Minimize impacts on wildlife movement
 - Valley of the Moon Trail should be routed through core campus rather than across Sonoma Creek, near the northern property boundary
- Wildlife corridor protections
 - To keep the entire property permeable for wildlife movement, minimize and consolidate trails and other public uses on portions of the property that are constricted by the existing developed footprint of the campus and neighboring communities, and remove unnecessary fencing

Related to recreation

- Trails system will provide places for people to connect with nature, engage in active recreation, exercise, and offer transportation opportunities
- Existing trail systems should be evaluated and redesigned to protect wildlife corridor and resource function, including addressing erosion and sedimentation
- Bikeways to connect Glen Ellen and regional trails
- Active recreation (e.g. soccer and ball fields) located within Zone C (campus)
- Non-motorized recreation in lakes, as compatible with water supply uses
- Ropes course for day use only, generally within the existing footprint

WITHIN CAMP VIA:

- Recreational use outside of creek buffer as much as possible
- Overnight recreational use guided by available practices and design standards to minimize disturbance to wildlife and the tranquility of the site, (e.g., limited use of vehicles, night lights, night noise, fencing)
- Keep development compact

Related to water resources

- Retain sufficient water to maintain ecological values and function on the site
- Retain water rights in public ownership
- Maintain groundwater permeability and recharge
- Maintain reservoirs for ecological function and safety
- Any new water infrastructure (e.g., enhanced recharge, raised dams), should be consistent with the natural ecological function of the area
- No structures or improvements in the wetland or wetland buffer
- Limit new structures and improvements in the groundwater basin outside the existing core campus
- Adhere to TMDL requirements



Related to agriculture

- Minimize fencing, and use wildlife-friendly fencing relevant for the specific agricultural use
- Use water-saving farming methods
- Grazing only to benefit resource protection goals—especially wildlife corridor function, habitat enhancement, and groundwater recharge—and to reduce fire hazard
- Cultivation of food crops only within Zone C, or generally near the intersection of Sunrise and Baker streets. Farming practices should be as compatible with wildlife corridor function and groundwater recharge as possible
- Agriculture-related uses with substantial infrastructure, such as processing facilities, located only within developed area



Related to the Core Campus (Zone C)

- Any night lighting within the core campus meets Dark Sky Guidelines and the County's Sonoma Mountain Guidelines (Sec. 26-90-120, revised 11/14), except for the ballfields, which would be limited to seasonal, short-duration use
- Keep domesticated animals on leash when outside
- Stormwater system must meet Low-Impact Development standards
- Wildlife-friendly culverts (no screens)

This property is central to sustaining the ecological integrity of Sonoma Valley and the greater North Bay.





**SDC COALITION LAND
COMMITTEE MEMBERS
(2017–2019)**

Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open
Space District (Chair and Facilitator)

California State Parks

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Jack London Park Partners

Sonoma County Regional Parks

Sonoma County Water Agency

Sonoma Ecology Center

Sonoma Land Trust

Sonoma Mountain Preservation

Sonoma Mountain Ranch Preservation Foundation

(Staff from state legislators representing SDC and the
Sonoma Valley also attended the meetings)

www.transformSDC.com