

Comprehensive Plan Goals & Programs (Chapter 3)

Goal # 1: Protect and enhance identified Goal 5 resources and other features of the natural environment using a variety of methods and strategies

Natural Environment Values and Policies

- Local citizens desire to be good stewards of their community's natural resources, including significant natural resource sites and natural hazards shown on the Prineville Goal 5 and 7 inventory.

Being a good steward means different things to different people but overall the statement is true. The division among property owners and citizens was very apparent during the hearings on the Natural Features Overlay District (NFOD). Property owners obviously wanted less protection but still understood the value of some protection. The protections to the rimrock and Barnes Butte were big issues but the increase to setbacks on Ochoco Creek seemed to be ignored.

- The local economy can benefit from efforts to protect the natural environment. Prineville considered the economic consequences of resource and hazard protection in its analysis of economic, social, environmental and energy (ESEE) consequences of alternative resource protection programs.

Whether you are driving through to see the Painted Hills or Rafting the John Day, fishing in the Crooked River, hiking trails, boating on the reservoirs or just need clean dry air, a large part of the annual tourism dollars in Prineville can be directly attributed to our natural environment. An ESEE analysis was conducted and presented to the public. The ESEE weighed the various categories listed above to help determine what types of regulations were needed or desired. The Overlay zone we have today is the result of that analysis and public process.

- Programs are needed to address the protection of the natural environment in a balanced and fair fashion given the urban development goals of the City. Prineville's limited protection program achieves an appropriate balance between urban development needs (employment, housing, schools, parks and institutions), conservation of significant natural resources, and protection of life and property from natural hazards.

As part of the Comprehensive Plan the City is required to address statewide goals 5, 6 & 7. The document is largely locally driven with some State oversight of the final document. It should be noted that the State did not impede or challenge the document in any way.

- Riparian and wetland areas support important wildlife and ecology and should be retained and enhanced to the greatest extent possible. Wildlife habitat associated with rivers, creeks and wetlands will be protected by maintaining and enhancing riparian vegetation within significant riparian corridors.

People are naturally attached to healthy rivers, creeks and wetlands. These types of areas tend to boost real estate values and have a positive effect on a region's economic value. If properly utilized they can also provide a cost effective means of cleaning stormwater runoff and wastewater, which add to their economic value.

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- The creeks and rivers that traverse the community need special setback protection and corridor enhancement. Prineville has applied a three-tiered protection program that recognizes different levels of development that have occurred near Ochoco Creek, Crooked River, and the Hudspeth and Ryegrass Drainages.

A three tiered protection plan starts with a strict standard, provides exceptions and then some type of option. The tiers could be described as follows:

Tier 1 – Establish a no build setback with vegetative and wildlife protections.

Tier 2 – Allow exceptions for water dependent uses and hardships.

Tier 3 – Provide for reduced setbacks for certain amenities if riparian corridor is enhanced.

- The cliffs and rimrock areas should be preserved and local regulations should be crafted to limit development intrusion into these areas. Prineville will continue to apply Crook County scenic setbacks along rimrock canyons as land is annexed to the City, and new local regulations will protect the rimrock face and talus slopes below.

Crook County has had a 200 foot setback on top of the rimrock for decades. The NFOD went a step further and created a setback below the rim.

- Barnes Butte provides the scenic backdrop and identity to Prineville, and is recognized as the community's defining scenic resource site. Prineville will allow for an appropriate residential development, while protecting Barnes Buttes and associated steep slopes, dry washes and raptor habitat through a three-tiered protection program.

Similar to the tiered approach with rivers and wetlands Barnes Butte was divided into zones as follows:

Tier 1 – Primary (1/acre, includes most of the unbuildable lands)

Tier 2 – Secondary (2/acre, includes more developable lands)

Tier 3 – Impact area (lowest area, standard zone density)

- The Prineville community has long experience with damaging floods. Prineville will amend the floodplain ordinance to incorporate a "no net loss of flood storage capacity" standard. Significant riparian corridors and wetlands within the 100-year floodplain will have a high level of protection.

The recent floodplain ordinance recommended by the Planning Commission does not include a "no net loss" policy also referred to as "no net fill". With the flood map update a new code needs to be adopted to adopt the maps and flood study by reference. A totally new code is not necessary but it was a good opportunity to change the format to Oregon's model code. In the future the code can be amended to include a "no net loss" policy if the Commission wants to recommend the City be stricter than the FEMA code. "No net fill" can also be conditioned through conditional uses and subdivisions.

- Air inversion policy ...[no change, or we could add language noting that tree conservation in riparian/wetland/habitat areas will have positive benefits for local air quality]

Because Prineville sits in the bottom of a caldera we frequently get air inversions in the winter time trapping wood burning smoke. The no breathing policy was a disaster. Trees are better.

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- The local water table is high in many areas of the community. To avoid further contamination of local aquifers, Prineville shall protect inventoried groundwater resources through adoption of a well-head protection ordinance as recommended by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality.

The City's wellheads are protected by a 100' easement preventing things like septic systems and drywells. The NFOD adopted a well recharge map that can be used to make decisions but specific regulations in these areas were not adopted. There is also a DEQ restriction prohibiting wells in the downtown area due to fuel contamination.

- The open spaces and natural areas within the community need to be inventoried and networks of open space within the community shall be maintained and enhanced, including wildlife habitat corridors, storm water management areas, trails and other sensitive areas. Prineville will maintain updated inventories of Goal 5 natural resource and Goal 7 hazard areas.

The NFOD and the Parks Master Plan address everything but stormwater management which is covered in our upcoming stormwater master plan and standards and specifications. There will be considerable overlap in these plans. Implementation is the key to actually accomplishing this goal. These plans should be updated as new areas are identified.

- The local urban forest helps to create shade, improve respite areas, enhance drainage ways, and beautiful the community.

Though more of a statement rather than a goal I believe the intent was to encourage more trees. While there is little debate about planting trees in parks and on private property, there are differing opinions on street trees. Overall everyone likes street trees but there are some maintenance issues that need to be accepted in exchange for the benefits listed above. Street trees are only required in a small portion of the downtown but many developers, especially in subdivisions, like to add them in planter strips primarily to enhance the streetscape.

- Citizens should have convenient access to natural areas when practical and as long as sensitive areas are not diminished by such access.

We have many natural features in Prineville with creeks, rivers, rimrock, wetlands and Barnes Butte. The goal is to make people aware and enjoy these areas; the trick is not to love them to death.

- Children and other citizens will benefit from learning about and understanding the special characteristics of urban wildlife and natural habitats.

Understanding the benefits of wildlife and natural habitats has proved to be advantages to communities. Not only do they add an aesthetically pleasing atmosphere but they also elevate land values, provide more recreational opportunities and improve water quality and lower infrastructure costs. A perfect example is the City's planned wetland system to treat effluent.

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Programs:

The City shall:

1. Create an inventory of Goal 5 resources and natural areas that require special protection and new regulations.

Such a document was adopted in 2009 and is referred to as the NFOD (Natural Features Overlay District).

2. Coordinate with the Crook County Parks and Recreation Department to develop an inventory of open spaces that can complement the system of parks and other recreational spaces.

Crook County Parks and Recreation has adopted their own Master Plan that inventories existing parks and future need. Open space in general has not been inventoried other than areas we know we don't want developed, such as the rimrocks.

3. Develop a system of linking open spaces, cultural/historic areas, natural areas, recreational areas, and public parks in coordination with the Parks District and other affected agencies.

The linking open spaces is part of the Parks and Recreation Parks & Trail Master Plan; however implementation of this plan is very difficult due to the amount of private property involved. The City code includes provisions through which the city can require dedication of parks and trails for certain developments when such amenities are identified in a plan, such as the Parks & Trail Master Plan.

4. Create a program that better informs the community about the importance of natural systems, cultural/historic areas, and open spaces.

We really don't have the staff for this but can inform people as the issue comes up. This type of program may be better suited through a partnership with Parks and Rec. and/or the Watershed Council.

5. Support and collaborate with the Parks District to keep the community Parks and Recreation Plan comprehensive and updated, outlining current and future requirements for open space and related Goal 5 resources.

We have a good relationship with parks and try to collaborate where possible, particularly on maintenance issues and grant applications.

6. Work with surrounding jurisdictions, including Crook County and BLM, to develop and implement a regional system of Goal 5 and open space corridors.

We did this with the adoption of the NFOD although we didn't create corridors within the City. There is too much concrete in the way. The best place to create such corridors would be along Ochoco Creek and Crooked River. We have setbacks but that is not enough to create a true corridor.

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7. Evaluate and update all ordinances regarding riparian setbacks, flood plain protection, enhancement and development mitigation.

This was all part of the NFOD ordinance.

8. Encourage corridor development for riparian protection, pedestrian use, and wildlife routes.

The NFOD provides riparian protections and wildlife routes if private property owners respect the riparian area. Pedestrian use, such as a trail system, is one of a few exceptions allowed within the setback.

9. Re-evaluate street design guidelines to include provisions for street trees, paths as alternatives to sidewalks, and plantings that provide shade and a variety of drainage controls.

The City's Standards and Specifications include provisions for street trees and the land use code allows alternatives to sidewalks if appropriate. Drainage controls are primarily referenced in the Central Oregon Stormwater manual.

10. Update and modify development regulations to provide protection of Goal 5 and other natural resources, reduce potential for flooding, and encourage private and/or public-private partnerships to protect and enhance sensitive natural areas.

The NFOD is the regulating ordinance for protection of goal 5 resources which, in turn, helps reduce flood losses. Public/private partnerships are generally coordinated through the Watershed Council.

11. Encourage revenue-producing activities in sensitive areas, resource land, and park and recreation development opportunities if they help protect natural features.

This sounds like an oxymoron; however, I believe the purpose of this program is not to close off sensitive areas and say "stay out" but to encourage people to enjoy it so they want it to visit Prineville and to encourage locals to protect these areas due to their economic benefits.

12. Leverage funding for habitat improvements by applying for grants to develop and protect natural areas, build trails, and sustain wildlife as appropriate.

The City generally works with Parks and the Watershed Council for habitat improvements.

13. Develop focused donation programs to help manage identified sensitive areas, naming of open spaces, riparian corridors, respite areas, waysides, trail segments, and other programs that can count toward grant match programs.

This is an interesting idea; however, it is geared more towards parks.

14. Encourage provision of open space with new development by providing developer incentives in addition to minimum standards in regulations.

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Our PUDs (Planned Unit Developments) provide incentives for providing open space and our recent code update looks at providing open space for mixed use developments and subdivisions 20 lots or more.

15. Restore the functions of damaged wetlands and floodplains within the community by identifying a feasible variety of strategies and implementation techniques.

Very difficult through town but we have done this on the Crooked River near the treatment plant and the wetland system for wastewater treatment the City is hoping to restore several miles of floodplain and wetlands. We also encourage subdivisions to locate buildable lots out of the floodplain.

16. Create design guidelines to include provisions for critical areas and natural resource lands that minimize fragmentation of species and habitat due to development.

The NFOD has created such guidelines through setbacks to creeks, rivers and wetlands. This should prevent fragmentation along the river and creek but the quality of those corridors is in the hands of the property owners. It is difficult and expensive to restore riparian habitat.

17. Limit development that diminishes desired or indicator species in or adjacent to fish and wildlife habitat areas.

Again this is where the setbacks come into play.