

HIRSCHMAN'S POND
VISION & PLANNING STUDY
2010



Introduction

In 2008 the Recreation Committee created a list of goals for the committee to accomplish. Among those goals was the creation of a Master Plan for Hirschman's Pond. The Master Plan process began with a sub-committee creating a draft Plan and presenting it to the Recreation Committee. After the Recreation Committee and City Staff reviewed the draft, changes were made based on comments received and the Master Plan evolved into the Vision and Planning Study. The Vision and Planning Study was then taken to the Planning Commission on February 18, 2010. The Planning Commission meeting also served as a public workshop for members of the public to give input to the Vision and Study. Adjustments were again made to the document based on comments at that meeting as well as letters received in the days leading up to the meeting. The Planning Commission recommended that the document be taken to City Council. The City Council then reviewed the Vision and Planning Study at their meeting on March 10, 2010. The City Council did adopt the Vision and accept the Planning Study. The edits that were made to the Planning Study by the City Council were to remove the suggestion of bathrooms and a meeting space. Minutes from both the February 18, 2010 Planning Commission meeting and March 10, 2010 City Council meeting are attached at the end of this document. (Attachment D).

Public Use Vision

Although the Hirschman's Pond property was significantly modified by the process of hydraulic mining during the gold rush days, the property has rejuvenated to a beautiful, restful, scenic, natural appearing environment. Wildlife is abundant and plants and trees have filled every area of the property. Considering the natural appearance of this property, the City intends to utilize it as an opportunity for people of all ages to observe and experience natural processes, just minutes away from downtown Nevada City. Improvements to the site will be limited to those that facilitate education, observation of natural processes, and outdoor recreation activities that utilize an undeveloped environment such as bird watching and hiking.

The property will remain primarily in its unmanaged state with no significant development or disruption to the wildlife living there. The property should be viewed as an area for passive recreation, where visitors primarily pass through for a hike or bike ride, but do not remain for long periods of time. Due to the rough terrain of the property, many active recreational activities would not be suitable for this location and could be disruptive to those wishing to enjoy the serene quiet that it provides. Therefore active recreational opportunities; other than bicycles on the trails, are not recommended for this property. The City also does not intend to establish picnic areas, trash receptacles or large changes to the landscape.

Planning Study

Background Information

The Hirschman's Pond property discussed herein consists of several parcels that the City of Nevada City owns and manages. Throughout this document the term "Hirschman's Pond property" or "property" shall include the following parcels, unless otherwise designated:

1. The house at 115 Cement Hill Rd. (APN: 05-010-29)
2. The property purchased from the Elks (APN: 05-010-58)
3. The property containing Hirschman's Pond (APN: 05-010-56)
4. The parcels surrounding the Indian Trails subdivision.
 - a. Parcel A – APN: 04-680-17
 - b. Parcel B – APN: 04-670-02
 - c. Parcel D – APN: 04-670-01
 - d. Parcel E – APN: 04-670-06

The parcels mentioned were purchased or gifted to the City at various times between the years 2004-2007. Attachment A is a map outlining the parcels and defining the acreage of each.

The General Plan for Nevada City; adopted March 24, 1986 included Hirschman's Pond as a desirable property to acquire because it would increase the "sense of a distinct city surrounded by green, wooded hills."

In 2004, the City acquired funds through the California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhoods, and Coastal Protection Act of 2002 (Proposition 40) to purchase the property containing Hirschman's Pond (APN: 05-010-56).

In 2005, the City purchased an additional piece of property from the Trustees of Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, Nevada City Lodge #518 (APN: 05-010-58) This property is adjacent to the property containing Hirschman's Pond and accessible by Cement Hill Rd. This expanded the possibilities for access and use of the Hirschman's Pond property. This property was purchased by the City with general fund dollars and a private donation.

In 2007, the City was gifted the open space parcels (Parcels A, B, D & E) surrounding the Indian Trails Subdivision, by the developer; Erickson Realty, LTD. In addition, the City received \$50,000 from Erickson Realty, LTD to be designated for maintenance of the open space parcels.

Also in 2007, the City purchased the house that is located in the middle of the property purchased from the Elks (APN: 05-010-29). The City saw it as beneficial to purchase this house, so there would not be a private residence in the middle of a City park. The house was purchased with funds from several sources:

- Funds acquired from a lot line adjustment
- Unallocated City Quimby funds
- A donation by the Wilson Bequest
- City General Fund

There are some use restrictions based on how the properties were purchased. The intent of the California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Act of 2002 (used for purchase of APN: 05-010-56) is to acquire and develop parks and recreational areas for the purpose of land, air, and water conservation

programs. It is also intended to acquire, restore, preserve and interpret California's historical and cultural resources.

Parcels A, B, D & E of the Indian Trails Subdivision were given to the City with the intentions of conserving them as permanent open space and for enhancement of trail opportunities.

Several funding sources were used to purchase the house (APN: 05-010-29). A previous lot line adjustment – not connected with this property. The funds received during that lot line adjustment were set aside and reserved for parks or trails. The money donated to the City by the Wilson Bequest was designated for park space.

The Vision and Planning Study take these restrictions into consideration. The City does not intend to use the property for purposes that would be in conflict with these restrictions.

Purpose of this Planning Study

This Study is intended to serve as a consensus-building document expressing general guidelines for amenities, programs, and management practices of the Hirschman's Pond property. No specific timeline is being suggested, as projects and development would be dependent upon availability of funding and completion of detailed environmental impact studies and public review. It is intended to suggest ways of precluding development that is inconsistent with the Vision for the property.

Current property uses and development

The City is in the process of constructing Hirschman's Trail from the Cement Hill entrance to the pond, through the pond property and joining with the parcels in the Indian Trails subdivision. This would be the primary way to traverse through the property. The Hirschman's Trail is a project that has already been approved and funded by a Recreational Trail Program Grant (RTP). This grant is a federal grant that is being administered by the California State Parks Department. Bill Haire, the Trails Coordinator for the Nevada County Land Trust wrote the grant on behalf of the City and is managing the project.

Included with this approved trail project will be natural and historical interpretive signs. With this added feature, the trail will be well suited for interpretive hikes. The City intends to create an Advisory Committee to focus on this aspect of the trail to determine what type of signs should be installed, what information should be included and create a Request for Proposal (RFP).

Possible future property uses, development and programs

The following suggestions are ideas that are proposed for the property, but would need sufficient funding, completion of detailed environmental impact studies and public review before proceeding with any projects or development mentioned herein.

Additional trails may be constructed in the future as ways to provide loops and access to areas for educational purposes or to enhance opportunities for hiking, biking and other dispersed recreation activities. The City does not intend to construct any trails around the entire pond, as much of the area is difficult to access and a trail could be intrusive to the wildlife living there. It should also be noted that the City desires to have Hirschman's Trail link to other local trails to create links for hikers making connections to town and longer walking trails.

The primary area for improvements on the Hirschman's Pond property would be near the entrance from Cement Hill Rd. At the parking area and trailhead, the desire is to have bicycle racks and signs about use of the property.

The house located at 115 Cement Hill Rd., would be included in this development area only due to the need for having potable water at the house. This project is in process and once completed, the house will be rented. The renter will not serve as a caretaker, but will provide a revenue stream for the City.

At the pond, the City desires to construct a barrier free viewing deck that would allow all visitors easy access to the pond. Prior to moving forward with this project, the City should take into account disabled access and public safety, in addition to potential impacts upon the environment and the natural outdoor experience.

The road entrance to the property from Hwy 49 will remain and will be improved to provide emergency access and property maintenance. It is not the intent of the City to allow public use to the property through this entrance.

In addition the City would like to see historical mining artifacts located on the property. The artifacts should be strategically placed to compliment interpretive signs, accentuate past uses and should not clutter the property.

Rules and Regulations

Resolution 2004-23, which was adopted in August 2004, outlines current rules and regulations for the Hirschman's Pond property. (Attachment B)

Ordinance 2010-01 bans smoking on city properties. This would apply to the Hirschman's Pond property. (Attachment C)

The City Attorney will assist with any additional rules that may want to be included at the property; including, but not limited to banning horseback riding and requiring pets to be on a leash.

Management Practices

The City desires to create a Forestry Management Plan for Hirschman's Pond as well as other Open Space parcels owned by the City. By managing the property to maintain forest healthy trees, those trees in stress or at risk can be removed before they die thereby keeping the property safe from potential falling trees. This may result in an economic benefit to the City as apposed to costly clean up at a later date. This process must also provide for regeneration of young trees to insure that the forest cover is maintained in perpetuity.

The property will have some clearing completed during trail construction; however the property currently is infested by non-native plants, primarily Scotch Broom and Himalayan Blackberries. These non-native plants greatly increase the fire danger and their presence is contrary to the objectives of the City for management of the property. Clearing for fire safety and the removal of invasive, non-native plants will continue as resources allow, with the goal of complete removal of non-native plants from the site. Any plantings on the property should be with plants native to this locale.

The benefits to the city for doing this kind of clearing is,

1. Reduction of wildfire risk

2. Opening up the landscape to better views
3. Invasive, non-native plants prevent native plants from being established on the site.
4. Native plants provide food and cover for native wildlife; non-native plants may exclude plants that provide valuable food and cover.
5. Invasive, non-native plants are costly to maintain as they aggressively invade public use areas (trails, parking areas, gathering areas, etc.)
6. Removal of non-native plants by community groups can be accomplished at little cost to the City and could result in a “Friends of Hirschman” type of organization.

In addition if the City has an adopted Management Plan, the likelihood of being awarded clean-up grants increases.

The pond evolved as a result of past hydraulic mining that occurred in the 1850’s. Members of the public had concerns about the water supply to the pond and health of the water. To determine the validity of these issues the City would need to create a management plan for the pond if studies determined this to be necessary.