

Sacramento County Regional Parks American River Parkway Group Activity & Special Event Procedures

Department of Regional Parks Document Introduction and Public Review Process

In May 2013 the Board of Supervisors directed the Department of Regional Parks to prepare a Special Event approval procedure for the American River Parkway. The purpose of the procedure was to clarify the Department's review process and provide the opportunity for public review and input during the application review.

Draft Timeline and Public Input

- 1) Draft release on October 11, 2013 for public review and input. Written comments will be accepted by the Department through October 31, 2013.
- 2) A public input meeting will be held on October 30, 2013 at Effie Yeaw Nature Center Classroom from 6:00pm-7:30pm.
- 3) A final draft will be released for consideration by the American River Parkway Advisory Committee (ARPAC) on November 15, 2013.
- 4) Pending ongoing public input and recommendations from the ARPAC the final draft is scheduled to go before the Recreation and Park Commission on November 21, 2013 for consideration.
- 5) Pending action from the Recreation and Park Commission a final draft and recommendation will be forwarded to the Board of Supervisors for consideration.

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The purpose of this procedure is to guide staff with coordinating a broad spectrum of special events and group activities held on the American River Parkway.

AMERICAN RIVER PARKWAY PLAN AND DEPARTMENT ANALYSIS

The American River Parkway Plan (ARPP) provides the land use and operating guidelines for the American River Parkway. The Goals and Policies of the ARPP which are applicable to the Group Activity and Special Event Procedures are as follows:

ARPP Goals (Page 10)

“To provide, protect and enhance for public use a continuous open space greenbelt along the American River extending from the Sacramento River to Folsom Dam.

- *To provide appropriate access and facilities so that present and future generations can enjoy the amenities and resources of the Parkway which enhance the enjoyment of leisure activities.*
- *To preserve, protect, interpret and improve the natural, archaeological, historical and recreational resources of the Parkway, including an adequate flow of high quality water, anadromous and resident fishes, migratory and resident wildlife, and diverse natural vegetation.*
- *To mitigate adverse effects of activities and facilities adjacent to the Parkway.*
- *To provide public safety and protection within and adjacent to the Parkway.”*

ARPP Concept Policies (Page 11)

1.1 Balanced Management

“The American River Parkway is a unique regional asset that shall be managed to balance the goals of controlling flooding; preserving and enhancing native vegetation, native fish species, the naturalistic open space and environmental quality within the urban environment; maintaining and improving water flow and quality; providing adequate habitat connectivity and travel corridors to support migratory and resident wildlife; providing recreational opportunities; and ensuring public safety.”

1.2 Recreation

“The Parkway shall be oriented to passive, unstructured water-enhanced recreation activities which are appropriate in a natural environment, and which are not normally provided by other County recreational facilities. To this end, development in the Parkway shall be minimal, and facilities which are primarily visitor attractions should be placed in less sensitive areas within the County Park system. Insofar as possible, development shall not occur in areas where natural ecosystems are still relatively undisturbed.”

1.3 Resource Protection

“Limitation on the use of the Parkway through design and management tools to prevent overuse of the Parkway and preserve the environmental quality, thereby ensuring the integrity of the Parkway for future users.”

1.4 Land Use

“No existing publicly owned Parkway lands shall be disposed of through sale, lease, or de facto uses adverse to the goals and policies of this Plan, in order to assure the long-term protection and integrity of the present boundaries of the Parkway.”

1.5 Cooperation

“Coordination and cooperation in Parkway planning and management is essential, especially in recognizing the many important roles of jurisdictions and agencies with regulatory responsibilities within the Parkway.”

ARPP Permitted Recreational Activities (Page 93-96)

“Permitted recreational activities in the Parkway are divided into five categories: Nature Appreciation, Recreational Enjoyment, Trails Recreation, Recreational Participation in Group Sports and Athletics, and Aquatic Recreation. Each of these categories is divided into an inclusive list of permitted recreational activities.”

ARPP Group Activities (Page 101-102)

“5.30 Any medium or large group activity conducted on any designated pedestrian trail, equestrian/hiking trail, or bicycle trail shall be coordinated with the Parkway Manager, to minimize the impacts on other Parkway users.”

“5.31 Competitive group activities may be permitted on the bicycle trail and shall be limited to:

a. Fund raising by non-profit or charitable organizations with public and civic interests; or

b. Competitive recreation for which no event entry fee is charged.

5.32 Competitive events on the bicycle trail shall not exceed one event per month.

5.33 Large special events may be permitted at Discovery Park on a periodic basis so long as natural resources are not degraded.

5.34 Small special events may be permitted in the Ancil Hoffman, River Bend Park, William B. Pond and Effie Yeaw Nature Center areas where events can be accommodated by existing facilities, so long as natural resources are not degraded.

5.35 Proper user education, facilities design and directional signage should be used to prevent user conflict, including conflicts between individual and group uses.

5.36 Recreational facilities shall be designed to blend into the surrounding natural environment.”

ARPP Permitted Recreation Activities (Chapter 5)

- Nature Appreciation
- Recreational Enjoyment
- Trails Recreation
- Aquatic Recreation
- Group Sports and Athletics
- Interpretive Programs
- Group Activities
- Special events

ARPP Group Activities Continued (page 101-102)

“Nearly any recreational activity that is permitted in the Parkway could involve a group activity. While group activities are a recognized use of the Parkway, large group activities may conflict with other activities in the Parkway, possibly to the exclusion of other Parkway users. For the purposes of this Plan, a large group is defined as any organized group of over forty persons; a medium group is defined as any organized group of twenty-one to forty persons; and a small group is defined as any organized group of eleven to twenty persons; whether assembled for competitive or non-competitive purposes.”

“The group activities policies in this Plan give the Parkway Manager authority to actively manage group recreational use when necessary to avoid or minimize potential conflicts and protect Parkway resources. For example, user conflicts may be addressed by requiring certain groups to seek a permit that obligates them to protect Parkway resources and minimize impacts on other users. It also allows, at the discretion of the Parkway Manager, to permit “special event” competitive activities. Eppie’s Great Race is an example of a permitted special competitive event. Enforcement of policies should also be combined with Parkway user education to promote user safety and stewardship of the Parkway’s natural resources. Successful education efforts in recent years include working with local nurseries to distribute pamphlets warning of harmful invasive plants, conducting outreach to recreational user groups to educate members on trail etiquette, and working with the media and the American River Parkway Foundation to encourage appropriate behavior and proper disposal of garbage on peak holidays. As recreational use of the Parkway grows, it will be important to build on these examples to create a strong, ongoing education and outreach program. The Parkway Manager should continue to partner with local organizations to leverage resources in implementing this program.”

Department Analysis: Group Activities

Chapter 5 outlines the authorized group activities for the American River Parkway. These activities are distinguished from special events as they are specifically defined and approved based on the activities and land use designations within the Parkway Plan. Group activities are further distinguished from special events as they generally don’t require additional event equipment or temporary facilities and rely on the existing parkway infrastructure or natural environment for the activity. The table on page 120 of the ARPP outlines the anticipated Recreation Activities including group activities based on group size, land use designation and activity type.

Department Analysis: Competitive Group Activities

Chapter 5 section 5.31 and 5.32 outline specific criteria and limitations for competitive group activities on the bike trail and does not place any other specific limitations on competitive group activities. A hardline approach to competitive activities only being authorized on the bike trail would appear to violate the goals of the parkway and past interpretation of the ARPP. Page 215 of the ARPP outlines the applicable amenities governed by the American River Parkway Plan. “The American River Parkway Plan is defined to include the American River and adjacent floodplain from the confluence with the Sacramento River up to Folsom Dam.” This leads the Department to conclude that maintenance roads, levee tops, river and other amenities are governed by the ARPP. Events like Eppie’s Great Race, Fair Oaks Sun Run, Meet the Marauders cross country run, and Soil Born Farm’s Veggie Chase have used the multiple parkway resources for

competitive activities such as the American River, levee tops, maintenance roads, and the equestrian/hiking trail for competitive group activities. To limit competitive activities to only the bike trail would in effect eliminate many events that have been found compliant with the plan's historical interpretation. The criteria outlined in section 5.31 and 5.32 are included in the ARPP to place specific limitations on the bike trail which is the most highly impacted recreation improvement within the Parkway. The limitations were designed to allow for competitive activities on the bike trail but limited those activities to one per month recognizing that closure of the bike trail has the potential for significant impacts to casual recreation users.

ARPP Special Events (Page 102)

"Historically, both small and large events have been held successfully in the Parkway at locations selected on the basis of the site's ability to support the scope and scale of the event, and the ability to manage the event in a way that minimizes impacts to the Parkway's natural setting, other Parkway visitors, and adjacent communities."

Large Special Events (Page 103)

"Special events in the Parkway are organized for the participation of the general public. Special events serve to introduce new users to the Parkway, potentially resulting in an expanded base of community awareness and long-term support for the Parkway. Events that help to educate and interpret the Parkway's resources are particularly valuable as opportunities to increase visitors' appreciation and understanding of the Parkway. Events also contribute to an important revenue stream that helps support on-going Parkway operations, maintenance, and programs. Additionally, there has been considerable community support for large events at the confluence of the two rivers. Historically, both small and large events have been held successfully in the Parkway at locations selected on the basis of the site's ability to support the scope and scale of the event, and the ability to manage the event in a way that minimizes impacts to the Parkway's natural setting, other Parkway visitors, and adjacent communities. These are important considerations in determining the appropriateness of an event, and whether or not it will be permitted."

"The permit process for a special event includes measures to minimize impacts on other users and Parkway resources. (See Chapter 11 of the ARPP for discussion on permit processes.) These measures typically include steps to avoid closure of the bicycle trail and boat ramps, defining the size of the event area and amount of parking allowed, temporarily fencing the event area to regulate access, leaving portions of the park and parking areas

available for other use during the event, regulating and enforcing amplified sound regulations, enforcement of alcoholic beverage regulations specified in the permit for the event, and advance notification regarding the date, time, and location of the event through signage and the media. This Parkway Plan also recommends that the permit process require: recycling, shuttle services and promoting bicycle use in order to reduce traffic congestion, and valet parking for bicycles.”

Small Special Events (page 103)

”Small special events of several hundred people may be held in the Ancil Hoffman, River Bend Park, William B. Pond and Effie Yeaw Nature Center areas. Small special events have included activities such as: the Renaissance Festival, Volunteer Recognition Events, Breakfast on the River (with the Sacramento Local Conservation Corps), Downriver Day and other fund raising events in support of the Department of Regional Parks programs and activities. Small special events are those that can be supported by the existing facilities of the area and do not require any facility development to support the event. The events should not impact the natural resources or other permitted uses. Where possible, the events should call attention to the resources of the Parkway and what they bring to enhance the event itself.”

Department Analysis: Special Events

The ARPP provides some limitations for special events based on group size and land use designation but does **not** provide specific definitions of special events. The Plan does, however, provide the purpose of special events within the American River Parkway, as well as overarching goals and policies for the operation of the American River Parkway for the department to consider when reviewing Special events. Special events are distinguished from group activities as group activities can be enjoyed by the community every day on the parkway, whereas a special event includes elements that are not normally provided on the Parkway. Special events may include some elements of group activities, but generally provide additional services and activities such as amplified sound, vendors and other related event services.

Special events (1) serve to introduce new users to the Parkway, potentially resulting in an expanded base of community awareness and long term support for the Parkway, (2) contribute to an important revenue stream that helps support on-going Parkway operations, maintenance and programs, (3) meet the Department’s Mission to “Enhance the health, enjoyment and quality of life in the region by providing a broad range of recreational activities for the community’s diverse populations.”

Department Analysis: Commercial Activities and Vendor Sales

Chapter 6 of the American River Parkway Plan outlines Non-Recreational use of the Parkway including commercial activities, caretaker facilities and agricultural activities. The ARPP distinguishes three types of commercial activities that can be considered on the American River Parkway. The three types of commercial activities are (1) commercial services, (2) commercial sales and (3) vendor sales. Further definition is provided in the table below.

Parkway Designation	Parkway Examples	Parkway Plan Reference	Approval Required
Commercial Services	Garbage pickup, maintenance, restoration, profession instruction, rental	Page 105 & 106 6.1, 6.1.1, 6.1.2, 6.1.3, 6.1.4, 6.1.6	Board of Supervisors
Commercial Sales	Food and beverages, recreation equipment, convenience items, other recreation or education interpretive merchandise.	Page 105 & 106 6.1, 6.1.1, 6.1.2, 6.1.3, 6.1.4, 6.1.6	Board of Supervisors
Vendor Sales	No samples given only an explanation of what is allowed: "In association with special events, including the sale of food and beverage from mobile day use-units in fixed locations in association with a special event permit.	Page 105 & 106 6.1.5	Parkway Manager

The ARPP distinguishes Commercial Activities (services and sales) from vendor sales associated with special events. The ARPP requires the Board of Supervisors to review seasonal, long term and permanent commercial activities. The criteria for approval are

outlined in chapter 6 and include considerations for the impact of the commercial activity and availability of the services near the parkway. Additionally, the ARPP recognizes the value of enhancing special events with vendor sales including the sale of food and beverages from fixed locations in association with a special event permit. The special event permit must be consistent with the criteria outlined in the ARPP and this procedure. The plan allows the approval of vendor sales at the discretion of the Parkway Manager and the permit is short term, generally no more than 2 or 3 days which is consistent with implementation measure 5.0 of the Plan (page 229).

ARPP Increased Recreation Use (Pages 103-104)

“As the region grows and land uses adjacent to the Parkway become more densely developed, there will be greater numbers of Parkway users. Increased use could lead to detrimental impacts upon the natural resources and a less satisfying recreational experience. The amount and level of acceptable use for an area is often referred to as “carrying capacity.” In ecology, carrying capacity is defined as the maximum number of individuals that a given environment can support without detrimental effects. Carrying capacity is addressed in Chapter 7 of the Parkway Plan via the land use designations that are the primary tool to address acceptable levels and types of use. Each land use category describes the size of the anticipated user group for that land use area, which sets expectations regarding the intensity of recreational use consistent with its natural resources. Land uses also define the recreational activities and facilities that are permitted.”

“Potential impacts associated with overuse can be reduced or avoided by implementing management actions. Use regulations and enforcement, user education, site investigations and monitoring, planning and proper design, and staff presence all contribute to minimizing the potential impacts visitors may have on park values. Parkway Manager will require new resources and an increase in stable funding to implement these management actions as Parkway use increases over time. The recreational use policies in this chapter, along with the other policies in this Parkway Plan, provide a framework for ensuring that a balance can be attained between recreation and conservation without diminishing resource values. Robust implementation of the policies will need to include an effort to secure greater resources for the Parkway’s operation and maintenance.”

Departments Analysis: Increased Recreation Use

Special events and large group activities are the most regulated activities on the American River Parkway. Events and activities are governed by land use designations within the ARPP in order to protect the natural environment and highly sensitive areas

form over- use or adverse impacts. Special events and group activities are primarily contained in Developed Recreation Areas, Limited Recreation Areas, bike trail, and other high impact recreation improvements along the Parkway. These areas are developed including asphalt parking lots, permanent restrooms, non-native turf grass areas, irrigation, and picnic sites. The land use designations ensure the impact of large special events and group activities are contained in areas that can accommodate high occurrence of foot traffic, vehicle traffic, temporary equipment, vendor sales, and heavy support equipment for large events. Large trail events generally transition out of these Developed Recreation areas in staggered increments or in locations which impacts to the natural environment are limited and can accommodate high amounts of use.

Special events and large group activities have a potential impact on the casual recreation users by increasing trail traffic, impacting visual enjoyment of the parkway, increased noise, and parking congestion. These impacts are difficult to monitor as they don't leave a lasting visual representation, however they are equally important to the environmental impacts and are addressed by limiting the number of special events and Group Activities permitted on the Parkway. It is difficult to identify specific number of events which cause a "tipping point" as all events are different in size, scope and location along the 23 miles of the Parkway and each user of the Parkway has a different tolerance level for noise, visual impacts, traffic and congestion. The Department must rely on Concept Policy 1.1 Balanced Management and continually be aware through monitoring and community input how special events and large group activities are impacting the casual recreation user. From this ongoing dialog with our community, the Department can ensure that we continue to meet the goals and policies of the ARPP and provide a balanced management approach as required by the ARPP.

DEPARTMENT APPLICATION REVIEW

Group Activity Permit Requirements (See Departments approved fee schedule for additional details)

Group Activity	Individual & Family (1-10 people)	Small Group (11-20 people)	Medium Group (21-40 people)	Large Group (41+ people)
Trails Recreation	Permit not required	Permit not required	Permit may be required*	Permit Required
Competitive activities	Permit Required	Permit Required	Permit Required	Permit Required
Other than Trails Recreation Day Camping	Permit not required	Permit may be required*	Permit may be required*	Permit Required
Other than Trails Recreation Picnic **	Permit not required	Permit not required	Permit not required	Permit Required
Other than Trails Recreation overnight camping	Permit Required	Permit Required	Permit Required	Permit Required
Group Sports and Athletics	Permit not required	Permit may be required*	Permit may be required*	Permit Required
Aquatic Recreation	Permit not required	Permit may be required*	Permit may be required*	Permit Required
Interpretive Programs	Permit not required	Permit may be required*	Permit may be required*	Permit Required

*any group activity that is determined to significantly impact other Parkway users, natural resources, and aesthetics in the Parkway is required to obtain a permit from the Department. If you are unsure, the activity leader/organizer should contact the department for an official determination. Application fees apply to large group activities and special events only.

**Special Event/Group activity permits are included with the rental of a picnic site (see section 3). Use must be consistent with "other than trails recreation picnic" group activity designation. Group size is limited based on picnic area occupancy.

Special Event Permit Requirements (see Department's approved fee schedule for additional details)

A permit is required for all special events as stated in Parks Ordinance 9.36.021 when it meets one of the following criteria:

- 1) The event is organized for the participation of the general public and attracts more than 41 participants.
- 2) A fee is charge for participating in the event.
- 3) Any event requiring the exclusive use of a park or facility.

Departments Event Review: Special Events/Group Activities

Special events and group activities (Events) will be evaluated and considered for compliance with the goals and policies of ARPP, Department approved fee schedule, and in accordance with County Ordinance 9.36.021.

Events must comply with the following minimum event approval criteria in order to be found consistent with the goals and policies of the ARPP. The need for a permit is further defined in the fee schedule.

- A. Events shall only occur in a manner that does not degrade the natural resources. If impacts are identified, the area will be closed for repair and restoration. (page 102)
 - i. Vendor sales associated with special events may be approved by permission of the Parkway Manager as part of a special event permit (page 107).
 - ii. Amplified sound can be permitted as part of a special event or group activity.
- B. Events shall minimize the impacts on other users of the Parkway.
 - i. Small special events of several hundred people (up to 700) may be held in the Ancil Hoffman, River Bend Park, William B. Pond and Effie Yeaw Nature Center areas. (page 103)
 - ii. Large special events (over 700) shall occur at Discovery Park. The capacity shall be determined by the availability of parking and limitations based on the City of Sacramento Fire Department. Consideration shall be given for alternate locations along the Parkway for Large Events; however additional conditions must be met in order to limit impacts to the parkway and meeting the

goals of the ARPP. Running events such as Eppie's Great Race, the Parkway ½ Marathon and others exceed the "several hundred people" threshold in the Parkway Plan for certain park areas but are carefully permitted as to limit their impacts to the Parkway and the surrounding communities.

- iii. Closed Trail Events shall not occur on the bike trail before 6:00 a.m. or after 12:00 noon.
 - iv. Special events shall not occupy 100% of any park facility and shall leave parking available for the general public. The exception to this policy includes the closure of the bike and pedestrian trail for competitive events which, for safety of the general public, require the 100% use of the bike and pedestrian trail.
 - v. Multiple events scheduled on the same weekend will be limited to only those activities which are small enough to have little impact on the other users of the Parkway.
 - vi. All large events (any event over 700) will include criteria within the permit requiring recycling collection services and bicycle parking consistent with implementation measure 5.b (page 233). Considerations will be made for bicycle safety when implementing this measure.
- C. Competitive group activities shall only occur under the following conditions.
- i. Trail events shall NOT occur on Holidays or Holiday weekends.
 - ii. Closed Trail Events on the bike trail shall not exceed one event per month, or twelve (12) events per calendar year. Closed Trail Events are not scheduled in June and August; July is reserved for Eppie's Great Race.
 - iii. Competitive events on the pedestrian trail shall only occur in a manner that minimizes impacts to the Parkway, and shall be limited in number based on anticipated impact to the casual recreation user and the natural environment.
 - iv. Competitive events on the Ancil Hoffman equestrian/hiking trail shall only occur in a manner that minimizes impacts to the Parkway, and shall be limited in number based on anticipated impacts to the casual recreation user and the natural environment.
 - v. Competitive events on the Parkway equestrian/hiking trail shall only occur in a manner that minimizes impacts to the Parkway and shall be limited to 4 per year. Event 1 & 2 (between January and May 31) Event 3 & 4 (between September 15 and December 15).

Department Application Approval

Once an application is filed with the Department of Regional Parks, the Department shall review the application to determine if it is consistent with the goals and policies of the ARPP. Permits, event conditions and limitations will be completed after the application is approved and finalized by the Department.

2.1 Application Review Process

The application review will determine if the event is consistent with the ARPP, County Code and determine if additional mitigation measures are needed to protect the Parkway or Parkway users from impacts of the special event or group activity.

2.2 Application Review and Initial Determination

The Department has two options after reviewing an application which include;

- (1) Initial denial of the application based on the goals and policies of the Parkway Plan
- (2) Initial approval of the application based on the goals and policies of the Parkway Plan

2.3 Application Public Review of the Initial Determination

The initial determination result will provide two outcomes. It will (1) determine if the event is consistent with the Parkway Plan and (2) secure a date for the event if the event is approved. After an initial determination has been made any interested party shall have 15 days to review the determination and provide public input. The application, and all supporting information, will be placed on the Department's web site for review with a closing date for comments. Based on public input, the Parkway Manager may elect to reconsider the initial determination or uphold the initial determination. Extensions of the 15 day review period shall be issued at the discretion of the Parkway Manger.

2.4 Final Determination

After receiving and reviewing public input the Department shall issue a final determination and shall either issue or deny a permit to the applicant. The final determination shall be made within 20 days of the closing of the public review process. The Parkway Manager shall have the authority to extend the Final Determination at their discretion. The Final Determination will include event conditions and requirements to

ensure the protection of the Parkway and the success of the event.

2.5 Post Event Evaluation

Special events and group activities will be evaluated by staff at the conclusion of the event. Event evaluation will include appropriate staff based on the size and scope of the event and address impacts to the Parkway resources, Parkway visitors, and compliance with the conditions of the department issued permit.

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