

PETITION TO FLAGSTAFF CITY COUNCIL
Pursuant to Flagstaff City Charter Article II Section 17
and Flagstaff City Code Title I Chapter 12

Pursuant to the Flagstaff City Charter and the City Code, any citizen (resident) of the City may present a written petition to the City Manager, signed by a minimum of 25 citizens from the City of Flagstaff, which shall be presented to the City Council.

Title of Issue: Request for changes in the Resource Protection Standards of the Zoning Ordinance

Action Requested: The Conservation Study Forum (CSF) is requesting that within 8 months (if possible) planning staff bring to Council amendments to the Resource Protection Standards of the Zoning Code that will implement the *Flagstaff Regional Plan 2030* sections on natural features, specifically springs and seeps, rock outcrops, wildlife linkages, and prairie dogs.

While CSF recognizes that staff has a heavy workload, our group believes that amending the Zoning Code to implement the natural and cultural resources policies in the Regional Plan is important to the community and will improve the overall quality of new development. CSF is prepared to assist staff in drafting amendments to the code.

We are a group of scientists, land managers, and interested citizens with diverse backgrounds proposing to assist staff with the implementation of the Regional Plan. Our group is very sensitive to private property rights and is making every effort to be fair and evenhanded with these amendments to ensure that they improve rather than hinder development. (See attached for more information.)

Printed Name of Submitter: Tish Bogan-Ozmun for the Conservation Study Form

(Submitter must also sign below and complete information)

Contact Information: tishflagstaff@gmail.com

(Phone Number and/or e-mail address)

RECEIVED BY CITY OF FLAGSTAFF		
DATE RECEIVED	BY	COUNCIL MEETING DATE

Request for changes in the Resource Protection Standards of the Zoning Ordinance

Introduction

The Conservation Study Forum (CSF) is requesting that within 8 months (if possible) planning staff bring to Council amendments to the Resource Protection Standards of the Zoning Code that will implement the *Flagstaff Regional Plan 2030* sections on natural features, specifically seeps and springs, rock outcrops, wildlife linkages, and prairie dogs.

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Regional Plan 2030 and Zoning Code Inconsistencies

The Resource Protection Standards section of the Flagstaff Zoning Code includes requirements for identifying three specific features in the site plan process and includes specific requirements pertaining to these three resources in the development process. These are floodplains, steep slopes and forests. There is a fourth paragraph that addresses “Other Site Features” that “the City will take into account,” including “areas of geologic interest and rock outcroppings.” This Priority for Resource Protection list (Section 10-50.90.030 on pages 50.90-2 and 3) is followed by other more detailed sections containing definitions and requirements for these three resources.

The current Resource Protection Standards in the Zoning Ordinances do not address all of the natural resources which are covered in the Regional Plan. This proposal remedies this inconsistency for springs and seeps, rock outcrops, wildlife linkages, and prairie dogs.

Policy LU.4.2. in the Regional Plan gives the overview of what the plan provides for natural and cultural resources. This policy is the basis for consideration of conservation in the development process.

Policy LU.4.2. Utilize the following as guidance in the development process: Natural Environment maps, Environmental Planning and Conservation policies, Considerations for Development, Cultural Sensitivity and Historical Preservation maps, and Community Character policies, while respecting private property rights.

In order to protect natural resources, they must first be identified. The regional plan’s “Significant Natural Resources” map is a good starting place for considering these resources and includes all the resources in this request, but should not be considered a substitute for surveying the property for these important features.

The following goals and policies from the Regional Plan support the need for consideration of natural resources in the zoning code:

ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE LANDS GOALS AND POLICIES

Goal E & C.7. Give special consideration to environmentally sensitive lands in the development design and review process. - This would include springs and seeps, rock outcrops, wildlife linkages and prairie dogs.

Policy E&C.7.1. Design development proposals and other land management activities to minimize the alteration of natural landforms and maximize conservation of distinctive natural features. – This would apply rock outcroppings

Policy E&C 7.2. Favor use of available mechanisms at the City and County level for the preservation of environmentally sensitive lands, including but not limited to public acquisition, conservation easements, transfer of development rights, or clustered development with open space designations. – this would apply to springs and seeps, rock outcrops, wildlife linkages and prairie dogs.

WILDLIFE GOALS AND POLICIES

Goal E&C.10. Protect indigenous wildlife populations, localized and larger-scale wildlife habitats, ecosystem processes, and wildlife movement areas throughout the planning area. – this applies to wildlife linkages, and prairie dogs.

Policy E&C.10.1. Encourage local development to protect, conserve, and when possible enhance and restore wildlife habitat. – This applies to springs and seeps, rock outcrops, wildlife linkages and prairie dogs.

Policy E&C.10.3. Protect sensitive and uncommon habitats such as Ephemeral wetlands, riparian habitats, springs, seeps, rare plant communities, and open prairie ecosystems including the physical elements such as water sources and soil types on which they depend through open space acquisition efforts, avoiding these features in the design of subdivisions and other development, etc. - This applies to springs and seeps, rock outcrops, wildlife linkages and prairie dogs.

Policy E&C.10.6. Conserve and restore important wildlife corridors through the planning area to allow wildlife to find suitable habitat in the face of climate change by moving along vegetational and elevational gradients. - This applies to wildlife linkages.

Landscape Approach

Nestled at the foot of the towering San Francisco Peaks volcano that is perched on an ancient limestone base, the citizens of the City of Flagstaff are witness to diverse landscapes that range from broad, open parks to riparian areas bounded by rocky escarpments and outcrops, all of which are home to a complex, interdependent ecological web of plants, animals, and humans. The quality of life of all these species depends on maintaining a thoughtful harmony in which we humans strive to do no unnecessary harm to this web of life. Water and light (warmth), are vitally important to all life, so whether it be riparian zones, wetlands, springs and seeps, or rocky outcrops where water emerges and the sun warms its surfaces and hidden dens, where rare plants grow and lizards, snakes and other animals reside, particular care should be taken to conserve and protect these relatively rare landscape features. Together, these resources create a unique ecology and quality of life, greatly valued by residents and visitors to Flagstaff. We are privileged to live in this natural embrace--which we call home.

Interconnection is a key to application of resource protection across a landscape. In almost every case all natural resources gain value when they are interconnected with similar resources versus being isolated or fragmented. Not all resources can be protected without impacting growth and development, so choices and compromises must often be made. The Protection Standards, described below, are provided based on the understanding when reviewing development plans, that resources located in areas with connectivity will be more resilient and more likely to thrive and be sustained over time.

In many cases, interconnectivity can be built into the development plans by taking advantage of various resource protection opportunities during the initial phase of site planning. For example, implementation of the Protection Standards can provide added value to the developer in terms of resource protection. For example, drainages can

provide for flood control areas and rights of way for utilities while also providing areas for recreation, protecting scenic vistas and open space, while preserving habitat for wildlife, protecting riparian areas and wetlands.

Considerations for Protection Standards for Applying the Natural Resource Ordinance

Areas providing multiple resource values should be favored for protection over areas providing fewer values. This is shown on the Natural Resource Map in the Regional Plan where the darkest colored areas contain the most overlap of resource richness.

Areas providing rare or unique resources should be favored for protection over more common resources (e.g. riparian favored over ponderosa pine forest).

Areas connected to other natural resource sites by undeveloped drainages, slopes, corridors (FUTS rights of way in some cases) or proximity should be favored for protection over isolated areas.

Determining resource values of green field sites proposed for development will require a site visit and assessment. Who will conduct the site visit and when it will be done will be determined by staff and consultants. Full disclosure of this visit will be made to the development community.

If the community wishes to protect resources on a site to an extent which precludes development, the community should attempt to purchase the parcel on the open market and set it aside as open space or a natural area. We recognize it will not always be possible. This option would require a source of funding and an efficient process to be successful.

The Conservation Study Forum and Habitat Harmony, Inc. would like the city to modify the definition of floodplains to include Seeps, Springs and Riparian Areas and add to the priority for protection list rock outcrops, wildlife linkages, and prairie dogs. These would become Numbers 4 ,5, and 6 in the Priority for Resource Protection section.

Members of the Conservation Study Forum and Habitat Harmony, Inc. would be pleased to assist City staff in the preparation of draft ordinance language.

Requests for changes in the Resource Protections Standards of the Zoning Code are being made by the Conservation Study Forum and Habitat Harmony, Inc.

The Conservation Study Forum is an informal group of scientists and land managers and others who are interested in the application of science to policy. Our **mission** is to work with others to ensure a continuing high level of conservation for Northern Arizona's exceptional natural, cultural, and historic resources. We value a collaborative effort of volunteers, groups, private entities, and agencies that includes involvement in planning, decisions, conservation and management.

Beginning in 1998, a group of local scientists and knowledgeable citizens acting as individuals responded to the call for public input on resources for the 1998 Flagstaff Area Open Spaces & Greenways Plan, the 2001 Flagstaff Area Regional Land Use and Transportation Plan, the 2003 Coconino County Comprehensive Plan, the 2014

Flagstaff Regional Plan 2030 Place Matters, and the 2015 Coconino County Comprehensive Plan revision. A list of members is available upon request.

Since the passage of the Flagstaff Regional Plan 2030, the Conservation Study Forum has analyzed the conservation goals and policies in the regional plan and their implementation in the zoning ordinance. The city planning staff has been very helpful in this process. The result of our work is now being made available to the council for their consideration.

Habitat Harmony, Inc. is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit corporation founded in 2001 upon the recognition of the inherent value of the natural world. The **mission** of Habitat Harmony is to assist humans to live in harmony with wildlife. Habitat Harmony is active in the following areas: studying, documenting and disbursing information on promoting harmony among all the variety of living creatures that may share a common habitat, educating the public about the needs of wildlife; providing alternative habitats for threatened, endangered or misplaced wildlife; relocating threatened, endangered or misplaced wildlife; caring for and studying threatened endangered or misplaced wildlife; providing, improving, or altering habitat to better accommodate the needs of living creatures sharing a habitat, and promoting public policies that protect wildlife.

It is the policy of Habitat Harmony to seek consensus, and to build cooperative relationships. It is our goal to pursue our mission in a manner that promotes a sense of community and avoids confrontational or polarizing tactics. We believe the greater good may be accomplished by a respectful approach to issues.

Some activities of Habitat Harmony and the board of directors may be seen at www.habitatharmony.org