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Creek Alliance Wants Emphasis on Wilderness

The Alameda Creek Alliance, a community watershed protection group, today proposed a citizen's alternative management plan for Sunol and Ohlone Regional Parks, which emphasizes restoring wilderness values to the parks. The East Bay Regional Park District is beginning environmental scoping and taking public input on a proposed Land Use Plan that will determine land use in the parks for the next 20 years.

The Alameda Creek Alliance proposal, Alternative W, calls for phasing out commercial cattle ranching operations in the parks, protecting aquatic and riparian areas and habitat for sensitive species, removing unneeded roads and other infra-structure, and initiating an adaptive management plan to restore habitat for native species and preserve the wilderness values of the parks.

"Sunol and Ohlone Parks are nominally designated as 'Wilderness Regional Preserves' said Jeff Miller, Director of the Alameda Creek Alliance. "Our proposal is an attempt to restore wilderness values, protect endangered species habitat, restore Alameda Creek, and enhance their natural beauty and recreational value."

Over 76% of Sunol and Ohlone Parks are currently leased for private commercial cattle grazing. Under Alternative W, commercial cattle grazing would be phased out of the parks 1/3 at a time, allowing 3-5 years after grazing exclusion to monitor the results. Habitat for endangered and sensitive species would immediately be protected from grazing. Some of the roads, culverts, fencing, and other infrastructure not needed for emergency or public access would be removed to restore the wilderness setting of the parks.

"Mount Diablo State Park, which ended commercial cattle grazing in 1989, provides a wonderful model for prioritizing natural ecosystem protection for parkland while managing for recreation, fire control, and other concerns," said Miller. He said that Mt. Diablo State Park should serve as a model for Sunol and Ohlone.