

Alternative Agriculture Policy

Purpose and Need

An Alternative Agriculture Policy will provide direction on the types of agriculturally related activities/enterprises permitted on city open space. Examples of alternative agriculture are agritainment (corn mazes, petting zoos, etc.), farm stands, community gardens and farm dinners or events. A more complete list along with more detailed descriptions is provided below in the “Definitions” section.

Alternative agriculture can provide opportunities for agricultural producers to diversify their income and market their products. Providing farmers and/or ranchers with these opportunities may increase the success of local food producers and contribute to an increase in local food and/or vegetable production, consistent with Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan policies. These activities also provide opportunities for members of the public to connect with the land and agricultural heritage of the Boulder Valley. These types of agriculturally related enterprises have also been increasing in popularity nationwide thus increasing the relevance of these activities to OSMP lands and the departmental need to assess their suitability. However, the umbrella term of alternative agriculture covers a wide range of activities/enterprises with substantial differences among them. This analysis will evaluate each type of alternative agriculture activity/enterprise to determine its suitability on OSMP lands.

Definitions

- **Agritainment (agritourism, agrotourism)**
Agritainment refers to a variety of commercial enterprises that provide an opportunity for entertainment or recreation in an agricultural setting. The most common agritainment activities include pumpkin patches, corn mazes, u-pick enterprises, petting zoos and hay rides. These activities are often provided together, or in groups, as the combination of activities/entertainment options tends to attract more customers.
- **Farm Event**
Farm events are defined by the Boulder County Land Use (BCLU) Code as a group between 26 and 99 people participating in an event where the farm is used as a venue. This includes farm to table dinners, weddings, wedding receptions, and any other gathering where eating and socializing occur and where the majority of the food served at the event is made with ingredients grown or raised locally often by the host farmer(s).

- **Farm Stand/Store**

Farm stands are places where agricultural and horticultural products are sold. Farm **stands** are defined by the BCLU Code as operating 42 days or less annually. Farm **stores** are defined as operating more than 42 days annually. The BCLU Code requires that agricultural and horticultural products must comprise at least 90% of annual sales.

- **Demonstration Farm**

A demonstration farm is a farm used primarily to demonstrate, teach, or evaluate various farming, ranching and agricultural techniques. Many demonstration farms not only have crops, but may also have various types of livestock. Participants often sign up for a series of classes or workshops. These farms may also offer programs to the general public to increase public awareness of food production and preparation practices. Demonstration farms are typically owned and operated by educational institutions or public agencies and the educational benefits are of greater focus than profits from agricultural production.

A farm camp (overnight camps not included) is similar to a demonstration farm however it is generally geared toward non-industry related participants such as youth or the general public. While providing an educational experience, the camps can also be for-profit ventures. Farm camps generally do not evaluate various techniques but instead focus on teaching or sharing basic farming practices.

- **Food Forest (aka forest gardens, edible forest gardening)**

Food forests are similar to orchards, but modified in accordance with permaculture principles. Permaculture is a systems approach where agricultural systems are modeled from natural ecosystems. Food forests are primarily composed of perennial food-producing plants, including fruit and nut trees, vines and shrubs and perennial and annual vegetables, and are arranged in a way that functionally and structurally mimics woodland ecosystems. The diversity has been shown to improve resiliency and reduce maintenance when compared to traditional orchards. Food forests are open to the public and are seen as a way to transform unused lots or more typical ornamental-focused parks into food-producing areas that promote land stewardship and create ties between community members and food production.

- **Community Gardens**

Community Gardens are composed of land divided into individual or shared plots for people to grow vegetables, fruits, nuts, grains and ornamental plants. Community Gardens are seen as a way to transform unused lots or more typical ornamental-focused parks into food-producing areas that promote land stewardship and create ties between community members and food production. Community gardens allow community members to play a direct role in growing food locally. Land for these gardens may be public or private and is often located near schools, hospitals, neighborhoods, or parks.

Policy Background

City Charter

Section 176 of the City Charter lists the purposes of open space which includes, “Preservation of agricultural uses and land suitable for agricultural production.” For the past 40 years, OSMP policy has been to limit the activities allowed under an agricultural lease to agricultural production and those activities necessary to support the operation.

The City Charter also lists “Preservation of land for passive recreational use, such as hiking, photography or nature studies, and if specifically designated bicycling, horseback riding, or fishing” as a purpose of open space lands. Agritainment, or its most common activities, were not listed among the passive recreational activities.

Visitor Master Plan

In 2005 City Council approved the OSMP Visitor Master Plan (VMP). The VMP introduced a management zoning system for all OSMP lands. Among the four zoning designations was the Agricultural Area designation. The goals for lands designated as Agricultural Areas are:

- Maintain the efficiency of agricultural production and operation.
- Manage agricultural production and operation to ensure safety for operators and visitors in the vicinity.
- Provide, where appropriate, public access and passive recreational opportunities that have minimal impacts on agricultural production and operation or other resources.
- Manage visitor access in areas of intensive agricultural production or operation to ensure visitor safety.
- Eliminate undesignated trails when they are redundant or damaging to resources.

Passive recreation and the necessary infrastructure, i.e. trails, are permitted in all OSMP Management Area designations, including Agricultural Areas.

Assessment Methodology

In order to evaluate the various alternative agricultural activities and determine their suitability on OSMP lands staff applied a slightly modified version of the Passive Recreation Activity Assessment (Activity Assessment), as all of the activities with the exception of the farm stand/store are activities with a recreational/entertainment component. The criteria identified in the Activity Assessment have been used to evaluate potential activities since the adoption of the Visitor Master Plan in 2005, providing staff and the community with a consistent method of evaluation and starting point for the discussion on whether and how new activities should be considered passive recreation. The alternative agricultural activities were assessed with criteria in four categories:

Category	Criterion
Relationship to setting	Dependence on an agricultural setting and/or OSMP lands
	Ability to increase people’s appreciation of agriculture or understanding of Open Space purposes.
Compatibility with resource protection	Compatibility with the preservation of agricultural resources
Compatibility with existing facilities and services	Compatibility with a low level of existing facilities and services (e.g. parking, minimal maintenance, enforcement, monitoring, etc.)
	Compatibility with providing a safe recreational experience
Compatibility with other activities	Compatibility with other recreational activities and other visitor’s experiences

For each criterion, the activity was identified as having either “Considerations” or “No Consideration.” For criteria with considerations, staff identified potential mitigating strategies to determine if the activity could be made more compatible.

A distinction was made between activities that OSMP may provide and those that an agricultural producer or lessee may provide. Agritainment, farm events, farm stands/stores, and farm camps are activities that an agricultural producer or potential lessee may be interested in providing, as they could increase the profitability of their agricultural operation. When evaluating the activities that an agricultural lessee could provide, staff determined that in order to remain consistent with the charter purposes, agricultural production would need to remain the primary use of the property and these other activities would need to be accessory uses. Staff interprets the City Charter’s reference to “agricultural uses” as agricultural production and those activities directly supporting an agricultural operation. Staff believes maintaining agricultural production as the primary use on agricultural lands is aligned with the intent of the Charter, and that if other more recreation-oriented activities became the dominant use of agricultural land it would not be consistent with the intent of the charter. Therefore the activity assessments for agritainment, farm events, farm stores and farm camps are limited to evaluating those uses as accessory, occurring only on farms where agricultural production is the primary purpose.

Agritainment

Dependence on an agricultural setting and/or OSMP lands
<u>Considerations:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agritainment depends upon an agricultural setting.• OSMP lands are not the only agricultural lands in Boulder County.• There are currently opportunities in Boulder County to participate in agritainment activities on private agricultural property.
Ability to increase peoples' appreciation of agriculture or understanding of Open Space purposes
<u>Considerations:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agritainment may increase visits to open space; these visits may lead to an increased awareness of agricultural open space lands. However, these activities are generally not designed to be educational, they may or may not aid in a visitor's understanding of agricultural production or the agricultural importance of open space lands. The educational benefit may be limited to answering basic questions a small child may have about farming.• U-pick operations may be different in nature from the other activities as visitors engage in an aspect, harvesting, of agricultural production which could foster an appreciation or understanding of the growing and harvesting of food/commodities and the types of food grown locally.
Compatibility with the preservation of agricultural and other resources
<u>Considerations:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• With the exception of u-pick operations, agritainment is not directly related to an aspect of agricultural production - the growing, harvesting, or selling of agricultural products; it is not an extension of an activity directly related to agricultural production.• Agritainment would require land, which could not simultaneously be used for agricultural production (e.g. corn or hay maze).<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ <i>U-pick operations would not take land out of agricultural production; on the contrary it is reliant upon lands remaining in agricultural production.</i>• Depending on the activities offered and number of customers, agritainment could interfere with the efficiency of farming operations.
<u>Mitigation Tools:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agritainment could be allowed only in areas unsuitable for agricultural production, in pasture areas, and/or in farmstead areas. However, limiting agritainment to farmstead areas might create more interference with the efficiency of farming operations.
Compatibility with a low level of existing facilities and services (e.g. parking, minimal maintenance, enforcement, monitoring, etc.)
<u>Considerations:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agricultural operations require a higher level of facilities/infrastructure than passive recreational activities. Agritainment does not require a higher level of facilities than agricultural operations, but requires a higher level of facilities than other passive recreational activities permitted on OSMP lands.• Agritainment requires a parking area.• Unlike the other types of recreational activities on OSMP lands which are free, agricultural

<p>operators would likely charge a fee. While commercial operators often charge a fee, participants and other OSMP visitors also have an opportunity to engage in the activity for free on OSMP lands without the services provided by the commercial outfitter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>While u-pick operations would charge a fee, it would be in exchange for goods/produce.</i>
<p>Mitigation Tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prohibit lessees from charging admission fees. However, diversifying income is the main incentive/purpose for the lessee.
<p>Compatibility with providing a safe recreational experience</p>
<p>Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If the activities are allowed in farmstead areas participants would be in an area with farmers operating equipment some of which is motorized and/or mechanical. The concentration of these two uses in a single area may not be safe for participants.
<p>Mitigation Tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Limit the hours of operation to times when activities related to agricultural production are not occurring. (e.g. weekends or evenings)
<p>Compatibility with other activities/other visitor's experiences</p>
<p>Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● While OSMP farms are open to the public they are not currently popular destinations for OSMP visitors. The lack of visitor activity leads to the conclusion that there would not be a high level of visitor conflicts with participants in other activities. However, the concentrated nature of these activities would make it difficult for visitors to enjoy/engage in other activities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Visitors could still walk through u-pick agricultural operation as operations are not closed to the public, they would only be unable to take food/goods which is consistent with current regulations.</i>

U-pick operations are more compatible with agricultural production as this activity relies on land remaining in agricultural production. U-pick operations also do not require specialized infrastructure, and while they charge a fee it is in exchange for agricultural products. Any operations would be required to comply with the applicable sections of the Boulder County Land Use code which provides guidelines for parking requirements. All operations would also require the approval of OSMP staff.

Due to compatibility issues with agricultural production, i.e. land being removed from agricultural production and interference with the efficiency of farming operations and the high level of visitor facilities and services required, staff recommends that of the activities in the category Agritainment, only u-pick operations be allowed on OSMP lands, and only as an accessory use.

Farm Events

Dependence on an agricultural setting and/or OSMP lands
<u>Considerations:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Farm events are by definition dependent upon occurring on a farm.• Most agricultural producers/lessees wanting to host an event do not own an alternative venue. However, some OSMP lessees operate farms on other lands they own, which could serve as alternative locales to OSMP lands.• There are currently opportunities in Boulder County to participate in farm events on privately owned farms.
Ability to increase peoples' appreciation of agriculture or understanding of Open Space purposes
<u>Considerations:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Farm events may increase visits to open space. Depending on the type of event, they may or may not aid in a visitor's understanding of agricultural production or the agricultural importance of open space lands.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Events such as celebrations, corporate dinners and weddings may not offer a suitable platform for the farmers to market their products and/or CSA membership, nor for participants to engage with the farmer. Typically at celebrations/corporate dinners the main focus of the event is not the food/farm itself.○ Events such as farm-to-table dinners are more likely to provide a better platform for farmers to share with participants information about the farm's agricultural operation and products, market their CSA, and more directly engage with participants. At farm dinners the main focus of the event is the food/farm itself.
<u>Mitigating Tools:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a distinction between the various types of farm events, farm-to-table dinners – hosted by the farmer, versus other events where the farm is mostly used as venue.
Compatibility with the preservation of agricultural and other resources
<u>Considerations:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Farm events are not directly related to an aspect of agricultural production – the growing, harvesting, or selling of agricultural products; they are not an extension of an activity directly related to agricultural production.• Farm-to-table dinners, hosted by the farmer are directly related to the selling of agricultural production; they are an extension of an activity directly related to agricultural production.• Farm events depending on the size and frequency could interfere with the efficiency of agricultural production.
<u>Mitigating Tools:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Confine farm events to farmstead areas.• Limit the number of annual occurrences to avoid disruption of efficient agricultural operations.
Compatibility with a low level existing facilities and services (e.g. parking, minimal maintenance, enforcement, monitoring, etc.)
<u>Considerations:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Farm events would require parking and an event space.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The event space could be in an existing permanent structure such as a barn or farm residence or could be a temporary structure such as a tent. ● The level of facilities and services increases with the size of the event. ● Farm events would require some level of oversight by OSMP staff. ● While farm events charge a fee, it is not for access but in exchange for a meal with products grown on-site.
<p><u>Mitigating Tools:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Require lessee to provide all temporary facilities (e.g. tents). ● Limit the size of the events to reduce the level of facilities and services needed. ● Limit parking to the farmstead area or area approved by OSMP staff
<p>Compatibility with providing a safe recreational experience</p>
<p><u>Considerations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If the activities are allowed in farmstead areas, participants would be in an area with farmers operating equipment some of which is motorized and/or mechanical. The concentration of these two uses in a single area may not be safe for participants.
<p><u>Mitigating Tools:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Evenings and weekends, the times farm events and dinners are likely to occur, are not common hours of operation for farming.
<p>Compatibility with other activities/other visitor's experiences</p>
<p><u>Considerations:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● While OSMP farms are open to the public, they are not currently popular destinations for OSMP visitors. The lack of visitor activity leads to the conclusion that there would not be a high level of visitor conflict with participants in other activities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Visitors could still walk through the farm as operations are not closed to the public, they would only be unable to participate in the dinner/taking food without paying which is consistent with current regulations.

Due to compatibility issues with agricultural operations and the potential high levels of visitor facilities and services, staff is recommending allowing farm-to-table dinners, but no other farm events. Staff recommends that farm-to-table dinners be permitted with conditions since they offer educational benefits to the community and direct marketing opportunities for lessees.

Farm to Table Event Conditions:

- Only permitted on properties with farmstead infrastructure appropriate for accommodating this use.
- All activities will be confined to within the farmstead area.
- OSMP leasees would be limited to two farm-to-table dinners annually.¹
- Dinners would be limited to 50 persons.

¹ Agricultural Properties in Boulder County are permitted per the Boulder County Land Use Code, as a use-by-right, six farm events annually, and possibly 7-12 with additional review. A venue hosting 12 or more events is considered a Reception Hall or Community Facilities Meeting Use.

- Dinners with fewer than 26 people, and not considered events per the Boulder County Land Use Code, would still require compliance with these conditions as long as a fee is exchanged for goods.
- Rent must be up to date.
- All outstanding management issues (identified by OSMP staff) must be addressed.
- All events must be approved by OSMP staff.
- Events with 1-26 participants require OSMP staff approval and count toward the maximum (=2).

Farm Stand/Store

Dependence on an agricultural setting and/or OSMP lands
<u>Considerations:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm stands/stores do not require an agricultural setting (e.g. farmer’s market). • Most agricultural producers have alternative venues to sell their products such as CSAs and farmer’s markets.
Ability to increase peoples’ appreciation of agriculture or understanding of Open Space purposes
<u>Considerations:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm stands/stores may increase visits to open space. Their presence could aid in a visitor’s, or persons passing by, understanding of agricultural production on OSMP lands and the locally grown products available. • Farm stands/stores may connect people, who live near or frequently pass by the farms, to the agricultural production occurring in their surrounding community.
Compatibility with the preservation of agricultural and other resources
<u>Considerations:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm stands/stores are directly related to an aspect of agricultural production, i.e. selling; it is an extension of an activity directly related to and supporting agricultural production. • Farm stands/stores provide farmers additional venues and opportunities to directly sell their products to consumers.
Compatibility with a low level existing facilities and services (e.g. parking, minimal maintenance, enforcement, monitoring, etc.)
<u>Considerations:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm stands/ stores would require a structure. The stand or store could be in an existing permanent structure such as a barn or other outbuilding existing on the farm or could be in a temporary structure such as a tent. • The level of facilities and services increases with the size and frequency that the store is operated. • Farm stands/stores would require some level of oversight by OSMP staff. The most staff time is anticipated during the initial Boulder County Land Use review/approval process and site set up.
<u>Mitigating Tools:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require lessee to provide all temporary facilities (e.g., tents).
Compatibility with providing a safe recreational experience
<u>No Considerations</u>
Compatibility with other activities/other visitor’s experiences
<u>No Considerations</u>

Staff is recommending permitting farm stands/stores on locations approved by staff and in compliance with the BCLU Code. Farm stands/stores are both compatible with agricultural production and may directly help connect the products to local consumers.

Demonstration Farms and Farm Camps

Dependence on an agricultural setting and/or OSMP lands
<p><u>Considerations:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstration farms and farm camps require an agricultural setting. • Boulder County Parks and Open Space staff runs a demonstration farm. • Farm Camps, catering to youth, are offered on private farms in Boulder County.
Ability to increase peoples' appreciation of agriculture or understanding of Open Space purposes
<p><u>Considerations:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstration farms and farm camps would aid in a participant's knowledge of agricultural production on OSMP lands, as the purpose is to share, teach, or evaluate farming practices or techniques.
Compatibility with the preservation of agricultural and other resources
<p><u>Considerations:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstration farms are directly related to an aspect of agricultural production i.e. evaluating farming practices or techniques and teaching those techniques to farmers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Farm camps are not directly related. Farm camps generally do not evaluate various techniques but instead focus on teaching or sharing basic farming practices to non-industry or youth participants. • Providing farmers and/or interested people the opportunity to learn about farming techniques can contribute to the long-term sustainability of agriculture in the Boulder Valley, the success of local farms and engage the next generation of farmers or local food enthusiasts. • Demonstration farms and farm camps would need suitable land and all the accompanying structures and infrastructure. It is unlikely a traditional agricultural operation could simultaneously operate as a demonstration farm or farm camp (using the same facilities/outbuildings). The activities related to a camp or demonstration farm may interfere with the efficiency of agricultural operations and production.
<p><u>Mitigating Tools:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In order to keep land leased to agricultural operators in agricultural production, demonstration farms and farm camps on OSMP lands could be limited to those administered by the department and/or a department/educational institution partnership.
Compatibility with a low level of existing facilities and services (e.g. parking, minimal maintenance, enforcement, monitoring, etc.)
<p><u>Considerations:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstration farms and farm camps would require parking. • Demonstration farms and farm camps would require the typical farmstead/agricultural structures. • Demonstration farms and farm camps, if administered by the department, would require a substantial amount of staff time. However, outreach and education is an established and important OSMP service provided to the community.
Compatibility with providing a safe recreational experience
<u>No Considerations</u>

Compatibility with other activities/other visitor's experiences

No Considerations

- While OSMP farms are open to the public, they are not currently popular destinations for OSMP visitors. The lack of visitor activity leads to the conclusion that there would not be a high level of visitor conflict with participants in other activities.

Visitors could still walk through the farm as operations are not closed to the public; they would be unable to participate in the demonstration/camp without paying or registering which is consistent with current regulations.

Due to demonstration camps' and farm camps' compatibility with agricultural production, interference with daily agricultural operations, staff is recommending these activities continue to not be permitted on OSMP leased agricultural lands. However, due to the educational benefits, support to the farming community and potential benefits to agricultural production, staff recommends that demonstration farms be permitted on OSMP lands/farmsteads operated by OSMP staff or in partnership with OSMP.

Community Gardens

Dependence on an agricultural setting/OSMP lands
<p><u>Considerations:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community gardens do not depend upon an agricultural setting. The preferred locations for community gardens are locations in close proximity or adjacent to high/medium density residential areas. Participants are often seeking a convenient and proximal location to their residence. • There are currently opportunities in the City of Boulder and Boulder County to participate in community gardening.
Ability to increase peoples' appreciation of agriculture or understanding of Open Space purposes
<p><u>Considerations:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community gardens may increase visits to open space. These visits may lead to an increased awareness of open space lands and knowledge about gardening/growing food. However, it would not aid in a visitor's understanding of agricultural production or the agricultural importance of open space lands.
Compatibility with the preservation of agricultural and other resources
<p><u>Considerations:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community gardens would require land to be taken out of traditional agricultural production. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Although the land used for community gardens might still be considered to be in agricultural production, as successful participants would harvest food, it is up to the participant's discretion to decide what to plant and not all participants will be successful in producing food. ○ The land will be removed from cultivation by an experienced/proven farmer and instead be cultivated by interested people with varying levels of skills, interests and time. • The properties suitable for community gardens are limited by soil and water requirements and are the same as those suitable to be leased for diversified vegetable farming. Prime farmland which meets the soil and water requirements is uncommon on OSMP lands. • Community gardens would remove prime farmland from traditional agricultural production.
Compatibility with a low level of existing facilities and services (e.g. parking, minimal maintenance, enforcement, monitoring, etc.)
<p><u>Considerations:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community gardens would require a parking area and irrigation infrastructure. • Community gardens would require a very high level of visitor services. • Staff would have many "lessees" in a relatively small area. In more traditional forms of agricultural stewardship, a single lessee has responsibility for large areas. Establishing, operating and maintaining a program would require substantial and additional staffing.
<p><u>Mitigating Tools:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A site could be leased to a community group which could in turn, sublet garden plots and address the operation and maintenance of the program.
Compatibility with providing a safe recreational experience
<p><u>No Considerations</u></p>

Compatibility with other activities/other visitor's experiences
<p><u>Considerations:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community gardening would likely have no more impacts to other visitors than vegetable farms. The properties could potentially remain open to non-participating members of the public.

Due to compatibility issues with agricultural production, i.e. taking prime farmland out of agricultural production, the high level of visitor facilities and services community gardens would require and preferable existing and potential locations on other lands, staff recommends that community gardens not be permitted on OSMP lands.

Food Forests

Dependence on an agricultural setting and/or OSMP lands
<u>Considerations:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Food forests do not depend upon an agricultural setting.• There are currently no food forests in the City of Boulder or Boulder County. An edible educational demonstration garden is planned for City lands.
Ability to increase peoples' appreciation of agriculture or understanding of Open Space purposes
<u>Considerations:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Food forests may increase visits to open space. These visits may lead to an increased awareness of open space lands and knowledge about permaculture principles. However, such visits by themselves would not aid in a visitor's understanding of agricultural production or the agricultural importance of open space lands.
Compatibility with the preservation of agricultural and other resources
<u>Considerations:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Food forests would require either land to be taken out of traditional agricultural production or the conversion of other open space land with suitable soils and water.• Although the land used for food forests might still be considered to be in agricultural production, the primary purpose is not agricultural production but recreational in nature.• Converting a <i>non</i>-agricultural property into a food forest would require the planting of a garden of non-native plants on natural open space lands. One of the purposes of OSMP is the preservation and restoration of natural ecosystems.• Visitors to the food forest are encouraged/allowed to pick and eat fruit which might require the visitor to travel off trail. Extensive or repeated off-trail travel could lead to areas denude of ground vegetation. Encouraging visitor to be off trail in some areas of OSMP would be contrary to direction in the VMP encouraging on-trail visitation.
<u>Mitigating Tools:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a trail system to serve the food forest. This would likely be a higher density of trails than found on other OSMP properties as the trails would need to wind through the forest to be effective in mitigating the ground disturbance created by visitors going to the base of the various trees and shrubs.
Compatibility with a low level of existing facilities and services (e.g. parking, minimal maintenance, enforcement, monitoring, etc.)
<u>Considerations:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Food forests would require a garden/orchard of perennial food-producing trees and shrubs. Typically the only visitor infrastructure provided for passive recreation activities are trails and trailheads. Activities which require more infrastructure are not considered passive recreation.• Food forests, depending on the site, might require irrigation infrastructure.• A trail and/or access for visitors would be required.• Food forests would require pruning and ongoing maintenance, a higher level of ongoing maintenance than the natural ecosystems comprising open space.

Mitigating Tools:

- Only permit food forests in areas that have adequate groundwater conditions to support perennial trees and shrubs without added irrigation infrastructure.
- The land could be leased by a community group that would be responsible for maintenance, similar to a structure often used by community gardens. However, leasing land to interested community groups in order to provide their desired recreational visitor experience (even if shared by OSMP) and maintaining the infrastructure is inconsistent with the department's past practices and operational policies.

Compatibility with providing a safe recreational experience

No Considerations

Compatibility with other activities/other visitor's experiences

Considerations:

- Visitors would typically be either hiking, biking, or riding a horse through a food forest. Food forests provide an alternative landscape/backdrop to the currently permitted passive recreational opportunities.

Due to compatibility issues with the preservation of agricultural and natural resources and the high level of visitor facilities and services, staff is recommending that food forests not be permitted on OSMP lands.