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# Task force: Preserve Foothills, rivers, South Ada

## The open-space panel's findings will be part of the county's development plan.

As Ada County Commissioner Rick Yzaguirre noted, the timing was significant.

On Tuesday - Earth Day - a 21-member task force that's been studying open space issues in Ada County identified four areas most in need of preservation as the county urbanizes:

### 1. THE FOOTHILLS

The task force wants the county to develop a consistent plan for space and recreation in the Foothills countywide; consolidate public land holdings through land exchanges and purchases; balance recreational use with resource protection; and protect resources like animal habitats and riparian corridors.

### 2. THE BOISE RIVER

The task force recommends that the county: protect river access and the connectivity of open areas along the river; protect cottonwood forests and floodplains with economic incentives; and require developers to specify how they will manage open space along the river to ensure long-term conservation.

The group recommended that the county partner with cities and other landowners to develop a system of greenbelts and parks to further protect open, natural spaces.

### 3. SOUTH ADA COUNTY

The task force suggests creating regional parks and preserves at Hubbard, Blacks Creek and Indian Creek reservoirs and other sites, building trails along irrigation canals and developing trail systems with input from a range of user groups.

### 4. THE SNAKE RIVER

The task force encouraged the county to keep working with the U.S. Bureau of Land Management to build recreation opportunities that don't conflict with resource protection at the Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area.

### WHAT'S NEXT

County spokesman Rich Wright said the task force's report will help fill in the final section of the county's plan to guide future development.

The plan is not legally binding but represents general guidelines and philosophies for growth. County officials held a series of workshops last year in which 94 percent of participants listed open space as their main county concern.

Frank Martin, Hidden Springs developer and task force member, said the top amenities homebuyers value are space and trails.

The task force report lists ideas about how the county might buy land, including designating money from the general fund during the budget process, hiring a staffer to find and apply for federal and state grants that support open space, or even encouraging legislation to increase incentives for land donation.

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