



**Memorandum**

**To:** Planning Commission  
**From:** Thomas Dansie, Director of Community Development  
**Date:** April 28, 2023  
**Re:** Protection of Natural Washes

---

There are a number of normally dry washes that run from the foothills to the Virgin River. Because the bulk of the Town's development is located at the base of the foothills or on the valley floor, many of these dry washes run through private properties which have development potential. In the past some property owners have altered the character of these washes as they cross their properties (e.g. covering the wash to expand the developable area of the property).

Washes function best in their natural state. Altering the natural character of a wash can have impacts on properties both upstream and downstream from the wash alteration. The General Plan emphasizes the need to protect the Town's natural resources, including dry washes, in their natural state (see the Natural and Cultural Resources General Goal). There is nothing in the code currently that requires natural washes to be unaltered.

Therefore, the Commission has an interest in exploring land use regulations that will promote the goals of the General Plan by preserving dry washes. The Planning Commission may wish to consider land use regulations intended to protect dry washes in their natural state.

The Commission may wish to consider the following issues as part of this discussion:

1. What constitutes a dry wash? How large does a drainage need to be before it is large enough to merit preservation?
2. Are there instances where it may be permissible to alter a natural dry wash (e.g. for a driveway or street crossing)?

The Commission should consider these questions and determine what regulations, if any, should be added to the code to regulate development near dry washes. Staff suggest the Commission could make changes to section [10-15B-4](#) to include dry washes as a feature that must be preserved in a grading or excavation project.

Staff anticipates direction from the Commission on this issue.