

State of California - The Resources Agency DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION		MANUAL
POLICY NOTICE		Operations
SUBJECT		CHAPTER
TRAILS POLICY		1800, Park Operations (Old DOM 1400 chapter)
ISSUED	EXPIRES	REFERENCE
8/3/2005	When Incorporated	Supersedes DN 88-65

DPR 375 (Rev. 10/2001)(Word 6/25/2002)

This Departmental Notice has been re-created for transmittal in electronic format. The original notice was signed by Theodore Jackson, Jr., Deputy Director – Park Operations.

The following procedure supersedes those issued in Departmental Notice 88-65. This revision sets the Department's procedure for establishing and approving trails and their appropriate uses and clarifies the management roles and responsibilities of the various levels of the Department.

Preface

California State Parks' mission statement and the California Park and Recreation Commission *Statement of Policy (2. Opportunities)* direct the Department to provide opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation. Trails are a primary state park facility that offer health-enhancing recreational opportunities, access to park resources for interpretation and education, and enhance community involvement.

Policy

It is the policy of California State Parks to provide trails for accessing park features and facilities and to provide planning that will effectively meet near-term and long-term recreation opportunities. The Department, through a public planning process, will strive to meet the recreational, educational and interpretation needs of its diverse trail users by developing trails within state park units, consistent with unit classification, general plan directives, cultural and natural resource protection, public safety, accessibility, user compatibility and other legal and policy mandates. Multi-use trails and trail connectivity with adjacent public trail systems will be considered in the development of trail plans or individual trails. Further, District Superintendents have the responsibility for implementing emergency, temporary trail closures, through a posted Superintendent's Order, for such reasons as resource protection and public safety. All trail plans, trail development and trail related management decisions will be consistent with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Guidelines

The Department's *Trails Handbook* serves as the Department's guideline for trail design, construction, survey, operations and maintenance standards. Trail planning is necessary to effectively balance public access and recreational needs or desires with management requirements to ensure appropriate levels of resource protection and public safety. The *Handbook* provides a detailed Unit Trails Plan template and guidelines that will ensure adequate trail system planning and public input.

Delineation of Responsibilities

Staff responsibilities in implementation of this policy include:

- **District/Sector/Park Units**

Identify a District Trails Coordinator and provide appropriate trails related training and program development opportunities.

Complete a comprehensive Unit Trail System Plan for each park unit when feasible and appropriate.

District Superintendents will be responsible for addressing trails issues that are brought to their attention by staff or by the public within the District in a timely manner.

- **Field Division Chiefs**

Provide statewide consistency reviews for Unit Trail System Plans and for specific District trail project decisions, such as changes in use, where potential statewide implications may exist. Work with the Statewide Trails Manager in his/her ombudsman role in resolving trail related issues with the public.

- **Deputy Director, Park Operations**

Responsible for the final resolution of trail related issues brought forward by the Field Division Chiefs and the Statewide Trails Manager in his/her ombudsman role.

- **Accessibility Office**

Provide review of all trail projects to ensure adherence to Accessibility guidelines, goals and objectives.

- **Statewide Trails Office**

Provide assistance for the planning and development of Unit Trail System Plans and review plans prior to final approval.

Assist in planning and coordinating of the Department efforts in trails training and in trail design and construction projects as requested.

Provide support for grant application preparation for trails-related grant funding sources and acts as the RTP and EEM grants project officer for approved state park projects.

Assist the Districts in resolving user conflicts and conflicts between the needs of natural and cultural resource protection, public safety and the recreation needs of the public.

The Statewide Trails Manager will serve as a “third party” ombudsman, working with Field Operations and Headquarters’ management in addressing California State Parks’ public trail issues not resolved at the District level.

- **Department Training Center**
Provide an ongoing Trails Training Program emphasizing the latest techniques, tools and materials for the design, construction and maintenance of trails.

Conflict Resolution Procedure:

The following standard operating procedure will apply to minimize and resolve public concerns and conflicts regarding trail use in a District. These conflicts may arise from an action such as a new or revised trail plan, park unit general plan or other District policy that affects trail use.

The procedure will create an opportunity for meaningful public input. This procedure could include one or more of the following: creation of an ad-hoc committee that will sunset when the issue is resolved, facilitating public meeting(s), sponsoring user forums, replying to letters, or any other activity that allows the public an opportunity for providing suggestions and/or relaying concerns.

1. Each District Superintendent shall establish a procedure under the guidelines above that best responds to accepting public input/comment on the issue.
2. If an agreement can not be reached, the issue(s) will be brought to the Statewide Trails Office (STO) as a mediating/ombudsman role. The STO will obtain input from all parties affected and attempt to reach a resolution. If agreement cannot be reached, the STO will provide an assessment and recommendations to the Deputy Director of Park Operations.
3. The Deputy Director of Parks Operations will review the information and make a final recommendation to the Director and Chief Deputy Director of State Parks through a Directors Action Request form. The recommendation will include the background on the previous negotiations.
4. Depending on the magnitude of the issue, The Director also has the discretion to determine the method of public input at each step in the process.

Theodore Jackson, Jr.
Deputy Director
Park Operations