

California Recreational Trails Committee

Meeting Minutes

July 23, 2009

City of Glendale Council Chamber

613 E. Broadway, 2nd Floor

Glendale, CA 91206

9:00 AM

I. Call to Order

- a. Meeting called to order at 9:04 AM by John Mercurio, Chair Proxy.

II. Introduction of Staff and Committee Members

- a. Wayne Breece (WB), Statewide Trails Manager for California State Parks (CSP)
- b. Dan Ray (DR), Chief of Planning Division for CSP
- c. Alexandra Stehl (AS), Associate Park & Recreation Specialist for CSP
- d. Greg Gandrud (GG), Member
- e. Maryanne Vancio (MV), Member
- f. David March (DM), Member
- g. John Mercurio (JM), Member

III. Minutes approval from April 2009 Meeting

- a. JM made a motion for approval of last meeting minutes, moved by GG, seconded and approved unanimously

IV. Reports

- a. State Park Director's Report (DR)
 - Budget – proposed substantial reduction would result in \$70 million in General Fund support for this year and another \$70 million next year. There is a worry this would cause up to 80% of parks closure. It has been gratifying to see the amount of support from the public for resource protection, including trail users. Parks still lose general fund money for just the coming fiscal year and about \$60 million will be backfilled so only losing \$8 million of the funds we relied upon. If the budget passes, the 10% in GF revenue will require some reductions in State Parks. Still identifying units to be closed, or partial closures, like keeping parks open on weekends and closed during week. In addition to the 10% reduction is the 3 furlough days that will affect our staff's ability to get work done. We are grateful for the support we have had.
 - Getting ready for summer season. People are staying closer to home due to recession, looking for lower cost activities. Our reports from park operations say that our campgrounds are full, trails are being well used, beaches are busy, and rangers and

lifeguards are working to keep people safe. Ron Schafer (Angeles District Superintendent for CSP) can give a local update.

- (Schafer) – When you think about the 10%, you think, well that’s not so bad. But when you put it on top of the 15 -18% we took in 1993 and the official cut in 2003, where we supposedly cut out the fat. This 10% cut is stacked on those two reorganizations and now the furloughs. More and more people are visiting CSP, giving us the ability to generate more revenue and showing that people really enjoy their parks. We are seeing a large increase in recreation.
 - (DR) can you update us on the possibility that fees could be increased?
 - (Schafer) Currently we are directed not to increase fees. Sometime in the future, that option could open up.
- b. Statewide Trail Manager’s Report (WB)
- Trails and Greenways Conference had 248 attendees. Follow-up survey conducted and a summary of results was discussed. Most popular workshops were identified, and we asked what topics they would like to have next year. Next conference is April 21-23, 2010 in Cambria, at Cambria Pines Lodge. We’ve done some scouting for programs and have been able to meet members of the trails community in the area. We have not selected any speakers or put out a call for sessions.
 - CSP trail programs are highly impacted by budget, including construction projects at three minor trails – Ewoldsen Trail in Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park, Easy Grade Trail in Mount Tamalpais State Park, and the Pacific Crest Trail in Mount San Jacinto State Park. In addition the Elephant Seal Boardwalk project is on hold.
 - I encourage you to visit the CSP Trails webpage and see the Trail Manager’s Tool Box.
 - Bill’s Trail at Samuel P Taylor State Park is used by mountain bikers and they asked for some improvements or alterations. CSP performed a review and issued a Negative Declaration stating the alterations are feasible. Equestrians asked that the project be put on hold until they get another look at it. So it is currently on hold.
 - The Statewide Trail Section completed the Recreational Trails Plan Progress Report in 2009, documenting the status of program goals and regional trail corridors in California. If funding is available, we would like to meet with trail managers throughout the state, collaborating to improve trails that would strengthen these corridors. I welcome your suggestions on that.
 - (GG) where is the website located?
 - (WB) www.parks.ca.gov/trails

- (DR) I would like to clarify that trail projects and the general fund are impacted by the inability of the State to sell bonds and cash flow problems. So, we had to curtail a wide variety of construction projects, which has set us back several years.
- c. Chair Report (JM)
 - Missing two members due to illness and one is on a long trip. We do have a quorum so we are going forward.
- d. Member Reports
 - (GG) The Santa Barbara area has been hit with several large fires. The fires not only left everything burned, but dangerous. The local trails community should be commended for what it has done to piece things back together. They had the cooperation of the Forest Service, County of Santa Barbara, local volunteers and advocates. Some trails have reopened.
 - (MV) On June 24th, San Diego County Parks and Recreation brought the first update of the County Trails Program to the Board of Supervisors, who approved it unanimously. There are 26 unincorporated communities within the County, each represented by their community planning or sponsor group. Eighteen of these communities participated in the trails program and after the update was approved, three more communities are included in the Community Trails Master Plan
- e. Subcommittee Reports
 - CRTC Awards Subcommittee – no report
 - User Conflict Subcommittee – (GG) Check the Trail Manager’s Tool Box on the website for multi-use guidelines and a survey that can be used prior to any changes in use.
 - Trail Portal Subcommittee – (GG) This subcommittee was started in an effort to get more info on trails online, but we are not in the position to sponsor our own website. Other entities are posting trail information, according to a CRTC report that was completed last October. My suggestion is to disband the subcommittee.
 - (JM) I agree. Maybe we reopen the subject in the future if funding becomes available.
 - (GG) In the interim, Park staff can post links to other trail portal sites, as appropriate – such as the American Trails site.
 - (DR) That is a wonderful idea. We are continuously exploring how to improve trails info on the CSP website. Right now we have information on many trails in the State Park System. We are exploring ways to post more information on the regional trail corridors and how they interact. We will continue to work with you and the committee.
 - (GG) motion to dissolve Trail Portal Subcommittee, seconded by DM and approved unanimously.

V. Presentations

- a. Larry Hensley (LH), Chief of Planning for Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation
 - Primarily I will be discussing collaboration and what we have been doing and intend to do over the next few years.
 - Area facts – 10 million people, 1 million in unincorporated areas, 34,520 sq. miles, 08/09 budget was \$23.2 billion.
 - We partner with many advocacy and user groups. We also deal with the 88 city agencies in the county, public service agencies, conservancies, private developers, water, gas and railroad companies, etc.
 - Three major projects are going on right now. The Northwest San Fernando Valley trails group is partnering with the city of Los Angeles in creating a trails plan. Funding has been set aside for next year.
 - The Antelope Valley group is working to map (GPS) existing trails and see where we want trails to be created. This should be wrapping up towards the end of 2010.
 - The Santa Clarita Valley Trails Committee added 300 miles of trails east to Acton, to be completed in 2010. This is in addition to what was in our trail plan.
 - We are educating advocacy groups and users to understand that because there is a map does not mean there is a trail. We plan to map all trails in the Fifth Supervisory District in the next year.
 - (Audience) Will the county ever adopt a new general plan?
 - (LH) I hope so because it is the process. The first park and recreation element for the new plan was just completed this last year.
 - (MV) Regarding your comment about your published maps and people wanting to run out and use them. San Diego County Parks considered taking down their planning website and posting the information on the Department of Planning and Land Use website.
 - (LH) We have done a similar thing with Santa Clarita Valley and a portion of Antelope Valley when it was updated in 2007.
 - (Audience) It is good news to hear about Rim of the Valley funding.
 - (LH) This is a collaborative effort between the city and the county.
 - (Lori Paul) Some small land trusts and conservancies are working with the County because some parcels are so small. I encourage working with private entities and thank L.A. County for making these small connections.

- b. Rory Skei (RS) & Paul Edelman (PE), Executive Director of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC)
- (PE) Part of our mission is that people have an opportunity to use open space that we preserve. I will summarize linkages we are working on, such as the Backbone Trail, Coastal Slope Trail, and the Los Angeles River Parkway, which ties into the Rim of the Valley corridor and overlaps with San Gabriel and Lower County.
 - (RS) The Rim of the Valley is planned in some portions and intact in other portions.
 - (PE) This Rim of the Valley Trail map is the first time we are presenting this information.
 - Los Angeles River Parkway – We saw some of the pocket parks during yesterday’s field trip. The biggest project, Tujunga Wash, was just finished. Pacoima Wash is being worked on. Bell Creek improvement project is frozen until the grant is funded. A major issue – how do you cross streams at a confluence? Nightmare to get a trail linking public areas around rail lines, freeways, etc. 125 acres in San Fernando Valley is a key linkage. Rim of the Valley goes mostly through Federal land. There are good size gaps in the Santa Susana Mountains and between the State Historic Park and Sage Ranch. Wildlife corridors and connectivity go together.
 - Backbone Trail update – there are two small sections that need to be finished to complete the Backbone Trail.
 - Coastal Slope Trail update – We are working on a section going from Backbone Trail to Coastal Slope Trail. A major issue is disconnected regional trails, where there is no trail connection and poor access to five coastal parks. We are working on land acquisitions, the Coastal Trail connection and wildlife corridors.
 - (DM) We are working to straighten out the Pacific Crest Trail in the Acton area. I didn’t realize the SMMC was working on that.
 - (PE) We follow the Feds lead.
 - (Jim Hasenauer) There are a number of parks in Malibu and they are a challenge to connect. The City of Malibu submitted a Trail and Recreation Plan to the Commission prohibiting camping and incorporating other objections from local residents. SMMC and partners submitted an alternative plan that better served the public and connected the trails that included cold camping grounds, all access grounds, etc. The Coastal Commission unanimously accepted the override to the City’s plan and then accepted the alternative plan.
 - (Marietta Kruells) I applaud all the efforts of these groups. How far east is the progress in the San Gabriel Mountains?
 - (RS) We do want to connect as far east as we can go in our jurisdiction.

- (DR) Do you have any needs or issues the Committee can help with?
 - (PE) We are having a hard time with CalTrans negotiating trail crossings at the 5 and 14 freeways.
- c. Belinda Faustinos (BF), Executive Officer for the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy
- Major Program Objectives – preservation of open space in urban areas. Sixty-eight cities in jurisdiction with scarce opportunities to buy large open space parcels. We also focus on mountain and foothills program and rivers and wetland projects. Our overall mission is to provide low impact recreation. We are modeled after the Coastal Conservancy and mostly operate through grants to local partners, including local governments, non-profits, joint powers agencies, private companies (Edison), water agencies, etc.
 - Regional Connections – We provide portals into the PCT system to help take pressure off the ‘one’ good access point. It is the only area that has a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL).
 - Shared Connections – San Gabriel River Project: Purchased 40 acres near Azusa River Wilderness Park, on the San Gabriel River Bike Trail, that will connect the city of Azusa trail to purchased property; Encanto Nature Walk; Lashbrook Riverfront Park – Rio Hondo River Bikeway Trail, there are many partners involved in this project; Duck Farm is the last agricultural operation in L.A. L.A. River Bikeway Trail – Maywood Riverfront Park is an extensive collaborative effort and would provide access to bikeway for a highly impacted area that is very park poor; Cudahy River Pocket Park access; Hollydale Park access; Ralph C. Dills Park access; Bellflower Train Depot and Gateway Cities Bikeway Trail connection; Compton Creek watershed has potential access for an impacted part of the city that has little open space; Golden Shores Trail access; Dominquez Gap Wetlands and Los Cerritos Wetlands.
 - (JM) You are very into trails, more than any other conservancy I am aware of, as well as providing transportation corridors for commuters.
 - (BF) These trails are used as transportation for commuters and homeless folks, which can open security issues.
 - (JM) You just need to show usage and with usage those other issues don’t pop-up as often.
 - (DM) I have a story to tell. There is a large bicycle club with a charity ride. Everyone usually buys the jersey, and this ride has one of the most coveted jerseys. It is from the City of Bell up to Whittier Narrows and is called the ‘Tour de Sewer’ in response to the homeless area – very catchy.

- (Lynn Brown) There are two large Whittier equestrian centers that are having problems with trail loss. What can be done to make sure these centers have use? Parallel trails for bike and hike/equestrians?
- (BF) Yes, parallel trails. The Duck Farm will have separate bike and hike/equestrian trails. Maintaining equestrian use is part of our mandate. Unfortunately, many facilities have shut down due to economic viability. Regarding the loss of trails in Whittier Narrows, a plan update would address some of those issues in Whittier Narrows. The open house in August 1st and would discuss those issues and take comments from the public. I would encourage you to go to that.
- (DR) Is there any assistance that the trails committee or statewide trails program could provide?
- (BF) I immediately jotted down the Trail Manager's ToolBox. We are trying to give our project partners all the tools they need. The greatest challenge is to make sure these tools are used.
- (DR) We would like to work through your agency, reaching out with workshops and inviting public works people to the trails conference.
- (BF) Definitely, workshops in the local area by staff managing these grants would be great.
- (Marietta Kruells) I am a little confused with your comment that dirt trails are not economically viability? Could you expand on that?
- (BF) I was not referring to dirt trails, but equestrian facilities. Edison was not renewing leases and they ran out, which cut down equestrian trails. That policy has changed, thankfully. But many equestrian facilities have shut down because of economic viability.

d. Presentation Discussion

- (GG) I joke about CalTrans, but it is a serious issue. Dan, could you explain a little bit about what procedures the State of California has about agencies working on areas of mutual concern.
- (DR) If I could answer that question, I would. We too need a better understanding. We realize that we need to make some additional connections. Our office recently hired someone from CalTrans to help understand that system better. As a committee that has been appointed by the governor, you could ask CalTrans to attend one of our meetings and talk to them about not only the challenges of working with them through their rights-of-way, but some successes. Investigate the amount of funding they have available to do trail work. Another way would be to get involved at future CalTrans meetings on regional

transportation plans. We can schedule their involvement in one of our future meetings.

- (JM) I suspect that it varies from district to district. If we can get CalTrans to make a policy, that would make it more uniform in a positive way for us.
- (DR) There is the policy side to it as well. One of the issues in the reauthorization of the federal Transportation Enhancement Act is whether it will be a separate program or funds allotted by regional transportation agencies. So we might want to think about how these pieces fit together. Maybe we want to involve someone from American Trails or Rails-to-Trails, who have been so active on those federal policies, involved in the conversation too. That would be a good idea.
- (MV) The paved aspect can be an issue. But dirt trails do provide transportation.
- (JM) Thanks to Jeff Weinstein from Trail and Open Space for organizing yesterday's tours and the meeting. There were a lot of other folks that helped. We have seen great hospitality here and really appreciate it.

VI. New Business

a. Committee Member Goal Discussion

- (WB) One goal legislated for this organization is to examine the state level trails, policies and programs, and to develop and encourage local government and agency planning and development. Some of the things you have accomplished are the Trails User Conflict video, Trail Managers' Toolbox and CRTA Awards program. This work helps to open the doors for how can we create a better trail system. I have sent you a list of ways the committee might be more effective (attached). Some of these ideas: explore trail routes and report what you find, focus on trail policies, report progress on trail corridors, encourage local trail and advocacy groups, and stay in touch with trail managers and organizations in your area. These are just some of the areas that are up for discussion. You might have other ideas in mind as a committee.
- (MV) Many of these items on your list we do but don't necessarily communicate to you at the committee meeting. Coordination with CalTrans would be a great addition to this list. This is a great list, and we do a lot of this but don't communicate.
- (JM) Interacting with long distance trail managers, agencies, and non-profits that coordinate or run regional trails in the plan could be something that we look at on our own and select a few that we feel comfortable working with. There are a few where I live, the Bay Area Ridge Trail and the Bay Trail that I would like

- (GG) Concurs with MV and JM comments.
- (JM) I would suggest that we forward to DR the agencies and groups that we propose to begin to work with.
- (DR) That would be great. An emphasis on understanding the progress that is being made on these regional trails and what assistance would be helpful. The info you folks would bring in would identify what needs trail managing agencies have and get progress on issues. We don't have a lot of money, but we could work with other partners to access the funds that are there. The information you bring in on your areas would complement our limited staff.

VII. Old Business

- a. (MV) amends members report. The Vista Irrigation District has filed a notice for a Negative Declaration in San Diego County for the naval training facility located on their property. The alignment of the California Riding and Hiking Trail is adjacent to the project and could be impacted. Public review ends July 28th. State staff should send a letter stating that we understand what they are doing but wanted to remind the Vista Irrigation District that the State still has an interest in the Riding & Hiking Trail.

VIII. Public Comment

- a. Mark Langton with CORBA and Conejo Open Space Trails Advisory Committee (COSTAC)
 - COSTAC consists of 1000 acres of open space and 100 miles of trails. I encourage you to consider multiple-use trails in open space areas. We see lots of people out on trails with their kids mountain biking. Opponents will have you believe that all bikers are speeding down trails; please take that with a grain of salt.
- b. Jim Hasenauer with International Mountain Biking Association
 - Please speak on the Trails & Greenways grants and recreational funding letter.
 - With the uncertainty of park closures and in the interest of the trails community, trails should stay open at 'your own risk', if parks should close. The clear mission of the Committee is to advise the Governor and State Parks. This is an opportunity to address this concern.
 - There are great opportunities in this area, both urban and back country. Most trail systems in the L.A. area are shared-use trails. One big exception is in the City of Los Angeles, currently working on bicycle plans within city park trails. This has been very difficult and there has been much opposition towards any bikes on any city trails.

- c. Lori Paul with Altadena Foothills Conservancy and Altadena Crest Trail Restoration Working Group (ACTRWG)
 - I echo concerns about multi-use trails. Many plans do not differentiate between mountain and street bike trails. The Hahamongna area is a major hub and they are planning a large strip for multi-use. There is a problem with how this project is described.
 - I encourage you to support dirt and non-packed trails. Please look at Patagonia's Freedom to Roam. Allows geophysical movements of animals, which is true multi-use – animals and people. Would like your support in making true historic trails, dirt trails.
 - All systems need to be linked to allow people to move from one community to another.
- d. Lynn Brown with Equestrian Trails Inc.
 - I'm not supportive of continuing trail access into parks if closed. Anarchy will follow. Patrol groups would not be affective.
 - There are good reasons for blocking bikes from city park trails. Mountain bikers have 1500 miles available in the L.A. area. Basically the parks are too full. There are less than 100 miles of trails in city parks dense with users, it just wouldn't be safe to add another user type. The bicycle situation is not containable or enforceable. This is a unanimous opinion of hikers and equestrians.
 - Regarding the Whittier area trails, if there are no trails then equestrian facilities are harder to sustain. Many trail routes were lost due to the Edison closures.
- e. Stephan Box with Bike Unifiers Collective
 - We appreciate the time you spend on this committee. Please respect our time and participation. This committee is covered by the Brown Act. This agenda is not transparent enough. If you are making any votes or decisions, they should be stated on the agenda. There are many topics that could have been covered and would have attracted the attendance of the public. We heard some great topics, but could have had a more robust conversation. The Brown Act is a great tool and the turn-out was not great for this significant event. We could work together for the next one.
 - (JM) The Trails Portal Subcommittee disbandment will be put on the next agenda so that the public will be made aware.
 - (GG) To clarify, the Brown Act does not govern this committee, but the Bagley-Keene Act does. I am not opposed to re-voting at the next meeting.
- f. Marietta Kruells with ACTRWG
 - Altadena gets left off the map on many of these actions. All three of the groups (that presented here today) have a foothold

in Altadena. Come in and fight for us. We are an unincorporated area of L.A. County. Please work for us.

- g. Dale Gibson with Foothill Trails District and Los Angeles Horse Council
 - There are 20 – 25,000 horses in L.A. County, please keep this in mind.
 - Please think about film and television production in State Parks. I would like to get this industry back in California.
- h. Joseph Young with the Sierra Club
 - Three million hikers a year use Griffith Park. Allowing mountain bikers on city parks is a serious issue.
 - The Sierra Club supports keeping open all State Parks. If a park is closed, the trails should remain open. Many of these areas are not supervised anyway. They need to remain open, as much as possible.
- i. (MV) CTGF Grants, totaling \$5,000 are given each year. We like to give out several smaller grants (totaling \$5,000), but would consider larger grant applications. We focus on smaller amounts to help as many organizations as possible. You can find the application and information on the Parks' website in the Trail Manager's Toolbox at www.parks.ca.gov/trails. The due date is September 30th and the winners will be announced at the next Trails Conference.
- j. (GG) We take multi-use very seriously. I would like to refer you to the multi-use guidelines and conflict surveys in the Trail Manager's Toolbox. The Trails Committee does not have any authority to decide trail-use – this is the responsibility of the local jurisdiction. We do hear what you are saying and are very concerned about it. There are some areas that are not safe to have multi-use trails. Safety also depends on the courtesy of people who are using the trails, giving due consideration for others. We want as many people as possible to use recreation facilities in a way that is safe. I just wanted to comment on that because we do hear what you are saying.

- IX. **Next Meeting** - Tentative October 20-21, 2009 – Clear Lake
 - (DR) are there other items you want to discuss at this meeting? Good location to learn about the Cross California Ecological Trail. This might not be the best location to get CalTrans involved. I wonder if there are other things that you would like us to be prepared to discuss at the time. Is the committee interested in hearing more information and perhaps provide some guidance to the director on trail and park closures?
 - All agree

- X. **Adjournment at 11:46 AM**