



EAST PEAK

FACILITIES MANAGEMENT PLAN

EXISTING CONDITIONS ATLAS AND PHOTOBOOK

SEPTEMBER 2015



PLACEWORKS



EAST PEAK FACILITIES MANAGEMENT PLAN

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1. INTRODUCTION

Situated at the highest point on iconic Mount Tamalpais, East Peak is a landmark for the Bay Area. The mountain serves as a monument for the region, visible from miles away and beloved by both nearby residents and distant communities. From the peak, there are breathtaking views in all directions, offering visitors a unique perspective on the landscape of Marin County and adjacent areas. California State Parks (CSP) has identified the 53-acre East Peak visitor use area (East Peak Area) as an underutilized resource and is implementing a Facilities Management Plan (FMP) to direct potential renovation of the site.

East Peak sits within one of the most comprehensive and admired open space networks in the Country. The peak is part of Mount Tamalpais State Park and completely surrounded by Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD) protected open space. Muir Woods National Monument sits with Mount Tamalpais State Park below East Peak to the south and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area is located adjacent the Park to the north and south. This network of open space as a whole is an incredibly popular destination for recreation and natural history tourism, drawing visitors from around the Bay Area and the world, as well as providing an important and valuable resource to local neighbors.

Although it can be accessed by numerous trails and by Ridgecrest Boulevard, the East Peak Area has relatively low visitor use compared with other destinations within the greater open space network. Historically, the site was significantly more active, serving as the terminus for the Mount Tamalpais and Muir Woods Railway (formerly Mill Valley and Mount Tamalpais Scenic Railway), a train traveling between Mount Tamalpais and Mill Valley, colloquially referred to as the “Crookedest Railroad in the World.” During this time, the East Peak Area contained a tavern, hotel, and dance hall, which attracted large numbers of tourists up the mountain. These facilities are no longer on East Peak, although some historic references to these previous uses are located throughout the site.

The East Peak Area is currently poised for a renaissance in its role on the mountain. The need for a master plan for East Peak was identified in the Mount Tamalpais State Park Recreation Assessment conducted in 2010, and initial steps towards identifying the future of East Peak were conducted between 2010-2011 as part of a design charrette and public workshop process. Based on these efforts, CSP set a dual mission for development at East Peak: to both improve facilities and access to the site while preserving the ecological and cultural heritage and integrity of the mountain. The FMP will be the next step in realizing a modern open space destination on East Peak: a destination that is in line with growing trends in recreation needs and modern perspectives on conservation and preservation.

PROJECT GOALS

Following are identified goals for the FMP process. The goals will ensure that the plan is in line with CSP's mission and addresses the unique conditions of East Peak.

1. Plan a comprehensive site with a sense of place. The belief that East Peak is not meeting its potential as a recreational destination was a popular concern. There was shared understanding the site had been developed piece-meal without the common sense of order and cohesiveness that can be achieved through the FMP.
2. Establish a world-class destination. Location and site conditions suggest that East Peak would be an extremely popular destination; however, current use is not consistent with other popular destinations within or near the park, such as Muir Woods National Monument. The journey to the site should be considered as part of the FMP.
3. Create seamless transitions through the site. When a visitor arrives at East Peak there should be a sense of arrival. As visitors move through the site, there should be obvious circulation cues directing them to key features and elements.
 - » Arrival. Visitors should feel like they have reached a destination rather than a parking lot.
 - » Orientation. Upon arrival, it should be immediately clear to the visitor where to go. There should be a clear hierarchy among site features so that the visitor can clearly find their way to desired amenities and destinations.
 - » Circulation. Trail access points should be clear and trails should be well maintained throughout the site. Also, spaces to gather should be clearly articulated through the site design to limit unwanted congestion in key passageways as people navigate the site.
 - » Visitor experience. The site should accommodate many user types without feeling crowded. Use should be spread throughout the site and not focused at the entrance.
4. Partner with local and underserved park user groups. CSP would like to reach out to user groups that are typically not included in the park planning either because they are not the typical park user or because they are not typically selected for outreach. CSP recommended looking at the Parks Forward Initiative Commission (Parks Forward) program for



Old Railroad Grade and Picnic Area at Historic Tavern Location

examples of outreach to a more diverse audience and expanding stakeholder engagement to incorporate diverse locations and approaches. Parks Forward recommends the following actions to expand use in A New Vision For California State Parks (February 2015):

Expand access to parks in underserved and urban areas, including through enhanced interpretation and environmental education programs and park amenities that make park experiences relevant to park visitors.

Improve transportation options to broaden park access, including initiating communications between park and transportation officials to determine how rail and bus resources can expand park access and expanding electric vehicle charging stations.

Support creation of an integrated network of local, regional, state, tribal, and federal park lands for park users.

Create digital, multi-lingual communication tools, including social media, that encourage and facilitate park use by providing information on nearby parks, activities, amenities, and transportation options.

Increase the number and variety of overnight accommodations.

Develop a strategic marketing program and active communications strategy to identify and reach potential new park visitors.

Recruit and train a more diverse set of park professionals who reflect California's cultural diversity.

When available, use qualified local vendors who reflect California's racial/ethnic and cultural diversity.

5. Partner with other agencies active on Mount Tamalpais, including National Parks Service, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, MMWD, and Marin County Parks to coordinate adjacent planning efforts. The Tamalpais Lands Collaborative initiated the One Tam project in 2014 to coordinate activities between public agencies working on the Mountain. Active participation in this initiative will be important for coordinating planning and building support for new projects.

6. The East Peak FMP should also consider the recommended actions in the Parks Forward plan to protect natural and cultural resources, engage younger generations, and promote healthy lifestyles and communities, as a means of reaching out to new park users.

7. Interpret ecosystem-level natural resource management. The views from East Peak provide unique opportunities for environmental education at a watershed level,



View of San Francisco Bay

and an emphasis on this progressive model of landscape management. Potential topics of ecological educational elements include:

- » Watersheds conservation. From the vantage point of East Peak, visitors can understand the intention and purpose of watershed management because they can witness how drainage patterns impact the area.
- » Habitat. East Peak can be used to view the diverse habitats around Mount Tamalpais and illustrate potential habitat restoration areas without upsetting restoration work, as well as bring attention to the role of the restoration and conservation ecologists working on the mountain.
- » Temporal change and processes. Historic views of the mountain contrasted with contemporary views can demonstrate human and natural change.

- 8.** Maintain commitment to the history of conservation and tradition of recreation. The cultural legacy of East Peak should be evident and remembered on site.
- 9.** Design the story of East Peak. Use the site to tell its history, utilizing landscape cues and features, in addition to interpretive elements. People should leave East Peak as advocates for the mountain.
- 10.** Maintain sacredness. Mount Tamalpais and East Peak hold a special importance for local residents and visitors even if they do not travel to the top. It is visible to millions of people every day.
- 11.** Draw heads and eyes to the mountain. Consider how changes to East Peak will affect views and people's relationship to the mountain.



Visitor Center and ADA Ramp

PURPOSE OF EXISTING CONDITIONS ATLAS AND PHOTBOOK

This Atlas and Photobook is intended to provide a concise overview of the existing conditions and context of East Peak, including local resources, current facilities, modes of access, planning constraints, and valuable opportunities. The information presented here was developed through a combined effort of field research and site analysis, as well as feedback provided by community members and key stakeholders. The document will be used to inform the FMP and serve as the framework for a strategy that maximizes potential at East Peak while preserving the treasured quality of the site. The Existing Conditions Atlas and Photobook is composed of the following chapters:

Chapter One: Introduction. This chapter presents an overview of the East Peak Facilities Management Plan and goals for the project.

Chapter Two: Location and Context. This chapter presents the site in geographical context, describes relevant planning efforts that impact the FMP, and provides a brief historical overview of human use of the site.

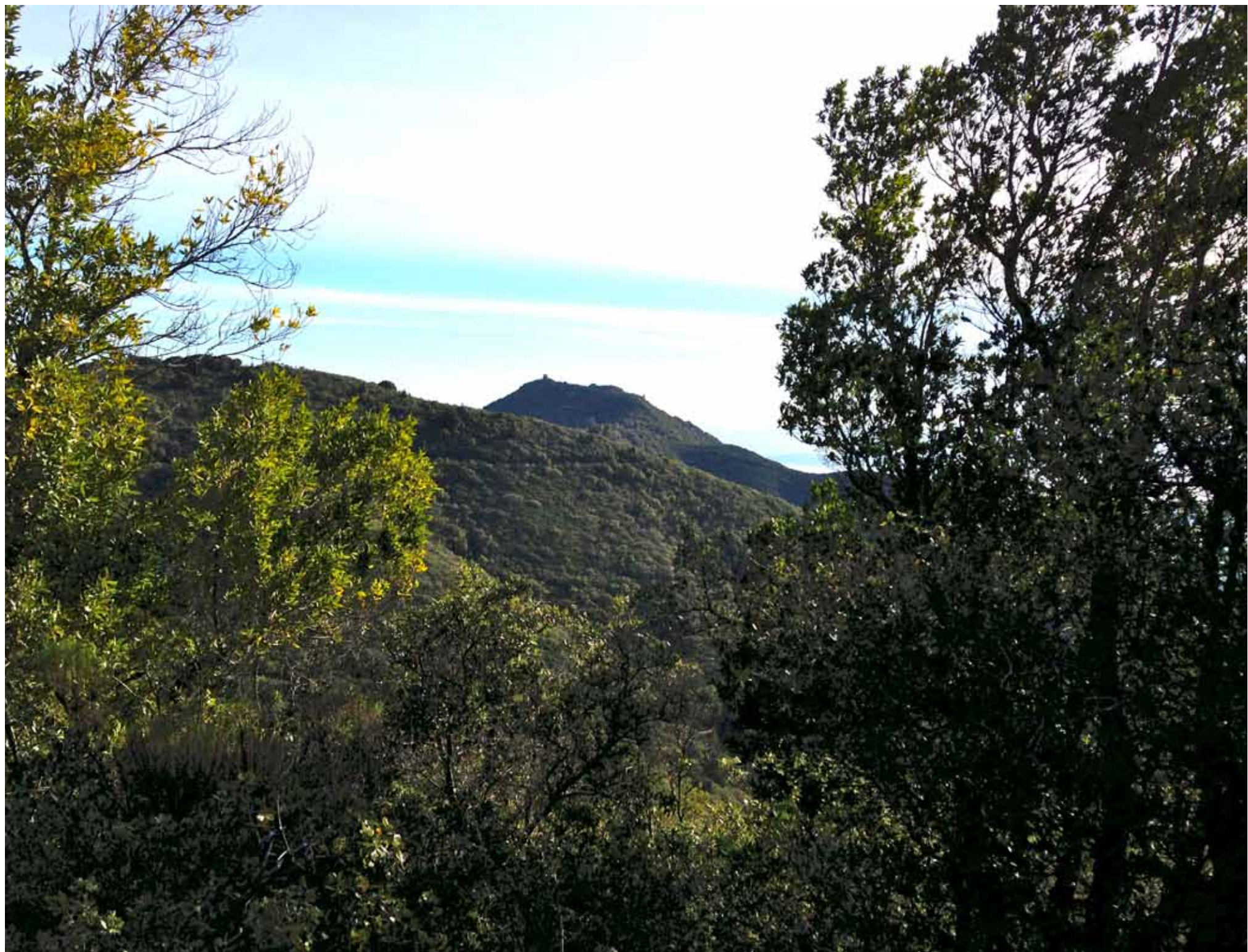
Chapter Three: Existing Resources. This chapter provides in-depth analysis of biological, cultural, and visual resources at East Peak and adjacent lands.

Chapter Four: Existing Features and Use Patterns. This chapter summarizes site facilities, current access to East Peak, and circulation within the area.

Chapter Five: Opportunities and Constraints. This chapter highlights key opportunities for new facilities or restoration at East Peak, as well as potential limitations that will impact the development of the FMP.



View from Vista Point on Verna Dunshee Trail



2. LOCATION AND CONTEXT

LOCATION AND OWNERSHIP

REGIONAL CONTEXT

Mount Tamalpais is the tallest mountain in Marin County and has three major summits, East, West and Middle Peak. Reaching approximately 2,571 feet at its top, East Peak is the highest point. The name Tamalpais comes from two Coast Miwok words, Tamal (bay) and pais (mountain or country),¹ and as this name suggests wide expanses of the San Francisco Bay and surrounding lands are visible from the mountain. Mount Tamalpais is visible from and accessible to urban populations throughout the northern San Francisco Bay Area, including San Francisco, East Bay communities, and Marin County.

There are four agencies responsible for the management of Mount Tamalpais and surrounding open space, including California State Parks (State Parks), Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD), the National Park Service (NPS), and Marin County Parks. The East Peak Area is operated as part of Mount Tamalpais State Park, although the eastern portion of the East Peak Area is within MMWD, as further discussed below. With the exception of East Ridgecrest Boulevard, which is owned by California State Parks, the East Peak Area is surrounded by MMWD lands.

East Peak is one of many use areas within Mount Tamalpais State Park, with attractions that include the view from the peak, the loop hike around the peak on the Verna Dunshee Trail, a visitor center, and the historic Gravity Car Barn. Other major amenities on the mountain near East Peak are shown in Figure 2-1, and include Mountain Theater, a 4,000-seat, open air amphitheater

¹ Hoover, M. B., H. E. Rensch, E. G. Rensch, W. N. Abeloe. Historic Spots in California. Revised by Douglas E. Kyle. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002.

constructed in 1933 by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC); and West Point Inn, a hike-in hotel constructed in 1904 along the route of the historic railway. Other destinations on the mountain and adjacent that are not within Mount Tamalpais State Park include Muir Woods National Monument, Marin Headlands, Muir Beach, and the nearby Point Reyes National Seashore.

SITE CONTEXT AND OWNERSHIP

The East Peak Facilities Management Plan area (East Peak Area) is an approximately 53-acre area that includes the peak and associated visitor use areas located at the eastern terminus of East Ridgecrest Boulevard, as shown in Figure 2-2. The East Peak Area is comprised of two parcels, the ownership and management of which is described below and illustrated in Figure 2-2.

East Peak Area Owned and Operated by State Parks (approximately 25 Acres)

State Parks purchased this parcel (referred to as Parcel 1) from MMWD in 1948 for approximately \$25,000. This parcel contains the parking lots and associated visitor facilities, with the exception of the Verna Dunshee and Plank trails. The Visitor Center and Gravity Car Barn are staffed by Friends of Mt. Tam, a volunteer organization that works with Mount Tamalpais State Park as a State Parks cooperating association. This parcel also includes a swath of land that connects from a well to the water tank associated with the East Peak Area.

East Peak Area Owned by MMWD (approximately 28 Acres)

Although this area is owned by MMWD, facilities within this area are co-managed with California State Parks and others. The deed for purchase of Parcel 1 gives the right for MMWD and State Parks to co-manage this area (referred to as Parcel 7). In practice, State Park's management activities within this area are focused on the Verna Dunshee and Plank trails. MMWD maintains the other trails and leases the Gardner Lookout Tower (Lookout Tower) to the Marin County Fire Department (MCFD). MCFD volunteers staff the Lookout Tower during wildfire season, from June through October.

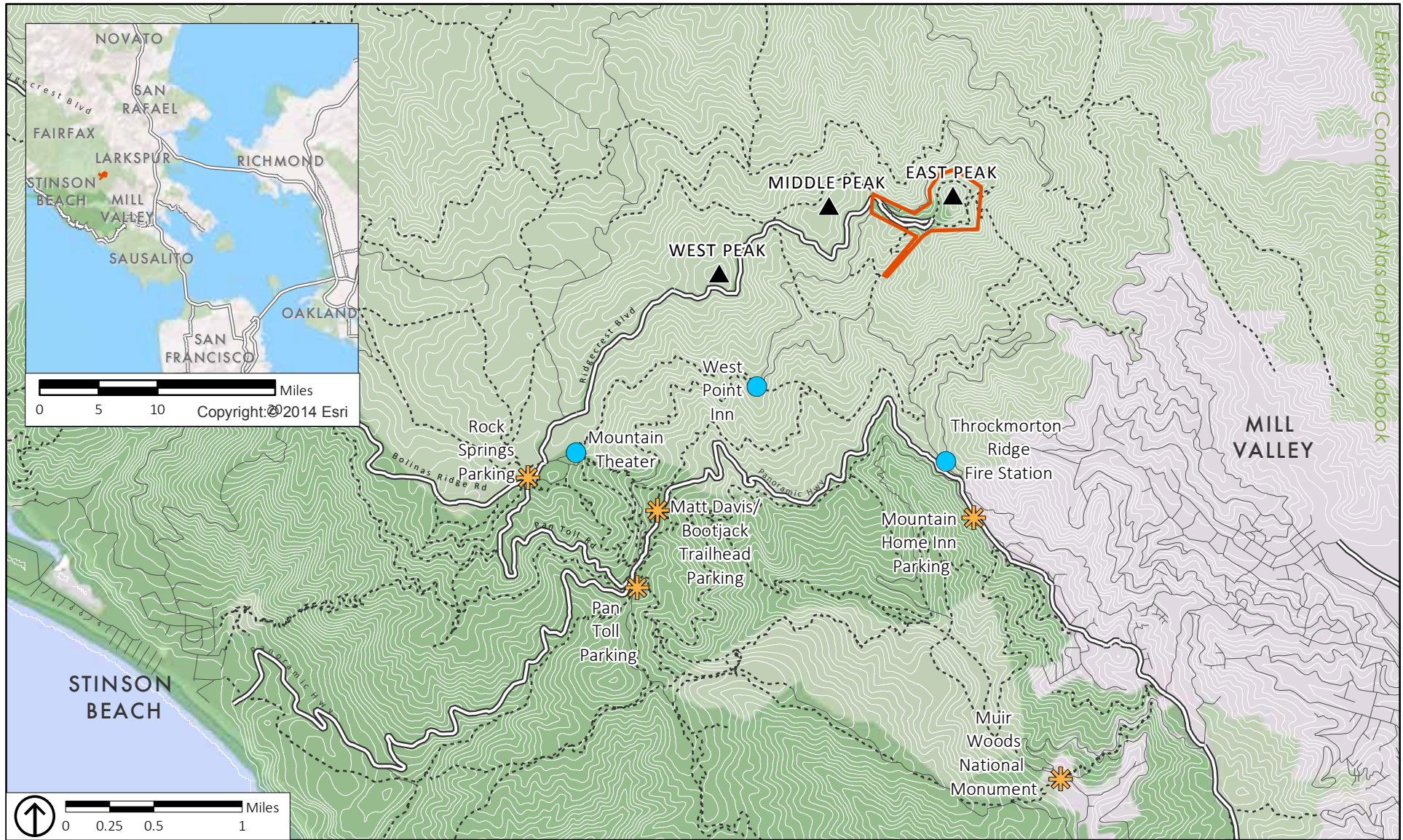
ACCESSING EAST PEAK

This section provides a brief overview of how East Peak can be accessed via vehicle, by transit, on foot, or on bike. For additional information regarding the existing circulation, transportation, or traffic, refer to Appendix A, Mount Tamalpais: East Peak Existing Transportation Conditions.

East Peak is accessible by private vehicle from the US 101 and the State Route 1 (Shoreline Highway) interchange in Marin City. Panoramic Highway is a two-lane road in the project vicinity, extending from Shoreline Highway near Tamalpais Valley to the north on the far eastern ridge of Mount Tamalpais State Park and then west to rejoin Shoreline Highway near Stinson Beach. Beyond the Bootjack Picnic Area, the road intersects with Pantoll Road, a roughly a north-to-south connection between Panoramic Highway and East Ridgecrest Boulevard. East Ridgecrest Boulevard begins at the intersection of Pantoll Road and West Ridgecrest Boulevard and heads north up the mountain, terminating in the parking lot of the East Peak Area. As of 2015, parking fees are currently \$8. One ticket is valid for all day use at any Mount Tamalpais State Park parking area, including Pantoll, Bootjack, and East Peak parking lots.

Limited transit service is provided within Mount Tamalpais State Park. Golden Gate Transit operates shuttle service between Marin City and Manzanita Park and Ride to Muir Woods on weekends and holidays between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

FIGURE 2-1. Regional and Local Context



Source: California State Parks 2014, PlaceWorks, 2015

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| East Peak Use Area | Major Vehicular Roads | ● Regional Features |
| Mount Tamalpais State Park | Local Roads | ✱ Parking Lots |
| Other Protected Lands | Trails | |

In addition, fixed transit service is provided by Marin Transit, which operates Route 61 along Panoramic Highway (Marin Transit, 2015). Stops in the project vicinity include the Pantoll Ranger Station (Panoramic Highway and Pantoll Road), located approximately 4.4 miles from East Peak, and Mountain Home Inn (Panoramic Highway and Edgewood Avenue), located approximately 7.1 miles from East Peak. Route 61 offers limited service on weekdays with only four roundtrips, but more frequent service on weekends between March and October, where headways as often as every 15 to 30 minutes in the mid-afternoon.

Numerous hiking and biking trails also reach East Peak, including Old Railroad Grade Fire Road which follows the historic route of the Mount Tamalpais and Muir Woods Railway. In addition, the Marin County Bicycle Coalition designated Panoramic Highway and Pantoll Road as primary bikeways and East Ridgecrest Boulevard as a secondary bikeway. Major staging areas for trails that reach East Peak include Mountain Home Inn, Matt Davis/Bootjack, and Pantoll on Panoramic Highway, as well as Rock Springs on Ridgecrest Boulevard. These staging areas provide limited parking and are also used to access numerous other trails on the mountain.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

East Peak's rich history is summarized below based upon the Cultural Resources Assessment Report which was prepared by Environmental Science Associates (ESA) Cultural Resources Group and is provided in Appendix B. The report has been partially adapted from a draft existing conditions report prepared for the Redwood Creek Watershed (Vick, 2002). Other sources of information include Mount Tamalpais – A History (Fairley and Heig, 1987) and the more recent Mount Tamalpais and the Marin Municipal Water District (Gibson, 2012).

ETHNOGRAPHIC SETTING

The East Peak Area is located within the ethnographic territory of the Coast Miwok. By the time of California's initial integration into the United States in the late 1840s, the Coast Miwok population had dwindled from approximately 2,000 individuals to one-eighth of its size before European contact (Kelly, 1978:414). In 1920, the Bureau of Indian Affairs purchased a 15.45-acre tract of land in Graton for the Marshall, Bodega, Tomales, and Sebastopol Indians. This land was put into a federal trust and these neighboring peoples that included both Coast Miwok and Southern Pomo were consolidated into one recognized group: the Graton Rancheria.

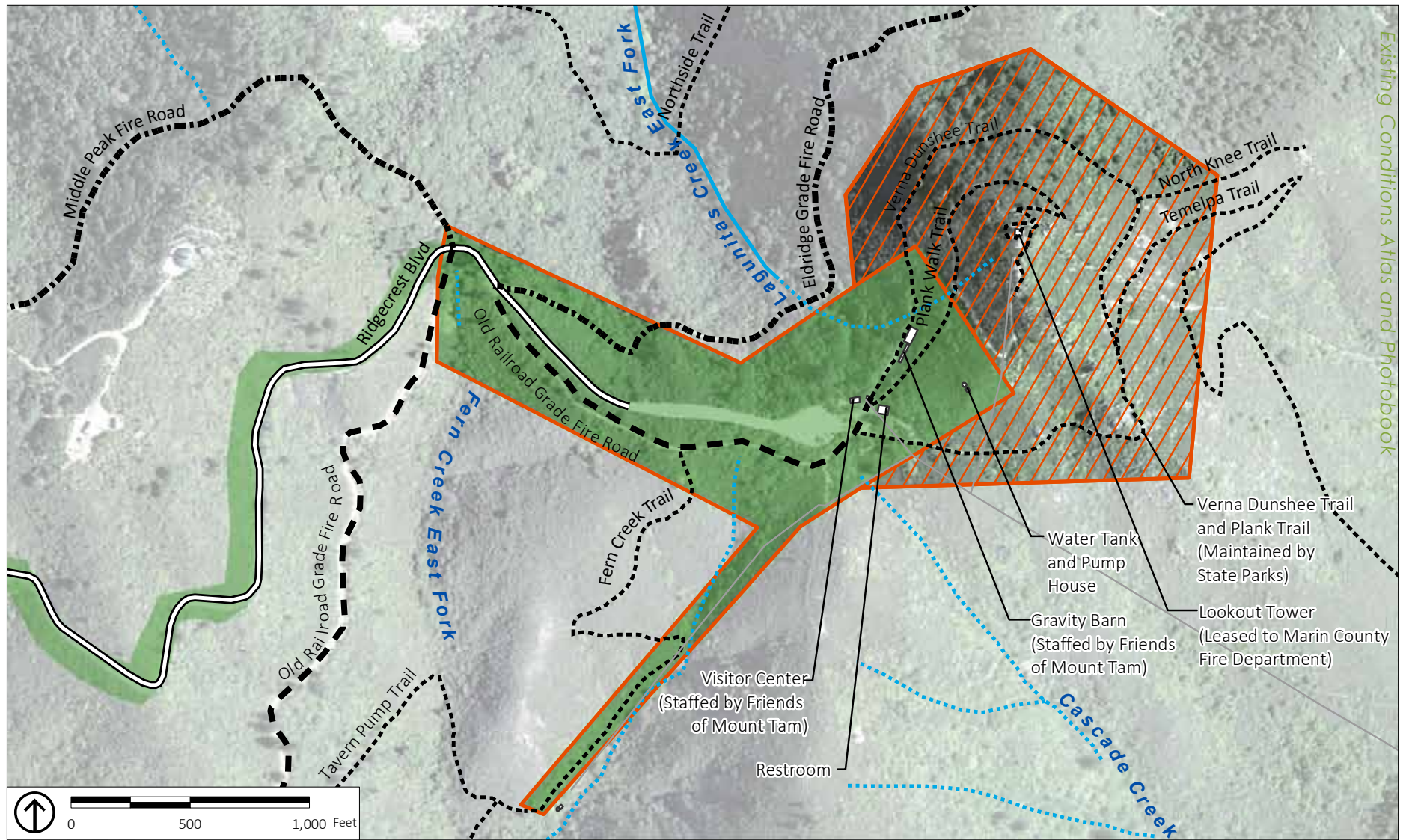
In 1958, the US government enacted the Rancheria Act of 1958, transferring tribal property into private ownership. Forty-four Rancherias in California were affected, including the Graton Rancheria, who represent the Coast Miwok people of Marin County and the Mount Tamalpais area. Since then, tribal members have continued to protect their cultural heritage and identity despite being essentially landless. On December 27, 2000, President Clinton signed into law legislation restoring federal recognition to the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria. The tribe currently has approximately 1,100 members.

While archaeological and ethnographic evidence does not offer any indication of the physical or spiritual importance of the mountain, East Peak is frequently used in recent times to scatter cremated remains.



Old Railroad Grade Approaching Restrooms

FIGURE 2-2. East Peak Site Context and Ownership



Source: California State Parks 2014, PlaceWorks, 2015

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| East Peak Use Area (State Parks Owned and Managed) | Road | Ephemeral and Intermittent Streams |
| East Peak Use Area (MMWD Owned and Joint Managed) | Fire Road | Perennial Streams |
| Mount Tamalpais State Park | Railroad Grade Fire Road | Utility Line |
| | Trail | |

EAST PEAK HISTORY AT A GLANCE

A brief history of development and recreation on Mount Tamalpais and East Peak specifically is provided in the timeline in Figure 3-3. The timeline identifies key developments in access (including ferries, the Mount Tamalpais and Muir Woods Railway, roads, and trails) that led to increasing recreational uses at East Peak, as well as the development of recreational facilities at East Peak including the Tavern at Mount Tamalpais which was a major recreational destination in the early 1900s. One hundred years ago, at the same time the 1915 Pan-Pacific Exhibition was being held in San Francisco, an average of 700 people per day were riding the Mount Tamalpais and Muir Woods Railway up to East Peak, gravity cars were offering amusement rides down the side of the mountain, and the Tavern located at the top of the mountain was offering eating, drinking, dancing, and overnight lodging. In 1930, however, the railroad line was removed due to limited use and declining profits. The Tavern was taken over for use as WWII barracks in 1942, and was demolished in 1950. Since the 1950s, and the post-war rise of private auto use, the top of the mountain has been much more accessible, allowing for much shorter visits that do not require meals or overnight stays.

Remnants of East Peak's history remain visible today, including the level areas that have long supported recreational use, the Old Railroad Grade, foundations of the Tavern, and the parking lot, as well as the Lookout Tower at the top of the Peak. As previously stated, additional discussion of the historical context for the East Peak Area is provided in Appendix B.

PLANNING CONTEXT

The East Peak Facilities Management Plan must be responsive to existing physical conditions, as well as the surrounding planning context. Key stakeholders, relevant plans and documents, previous planning efforts and associated outreach, and concurrent planning efforts for West Peak are described below as they relate to the planning process and East Peak's future.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Mount Tamalpais State Park and the East Peak Area play an important role in the lives, recreation, and work of many individuals and organizations, and therefore there is a large and diverse group of stakeholders with potential interest in East Peak's future. Stakeholders include agencies and jurisdictions that manage the mountain and adjacent open space, a wide-range of community groups, as well as individuals such as regional residents and East Peak visitors. Stakeholders include the following:

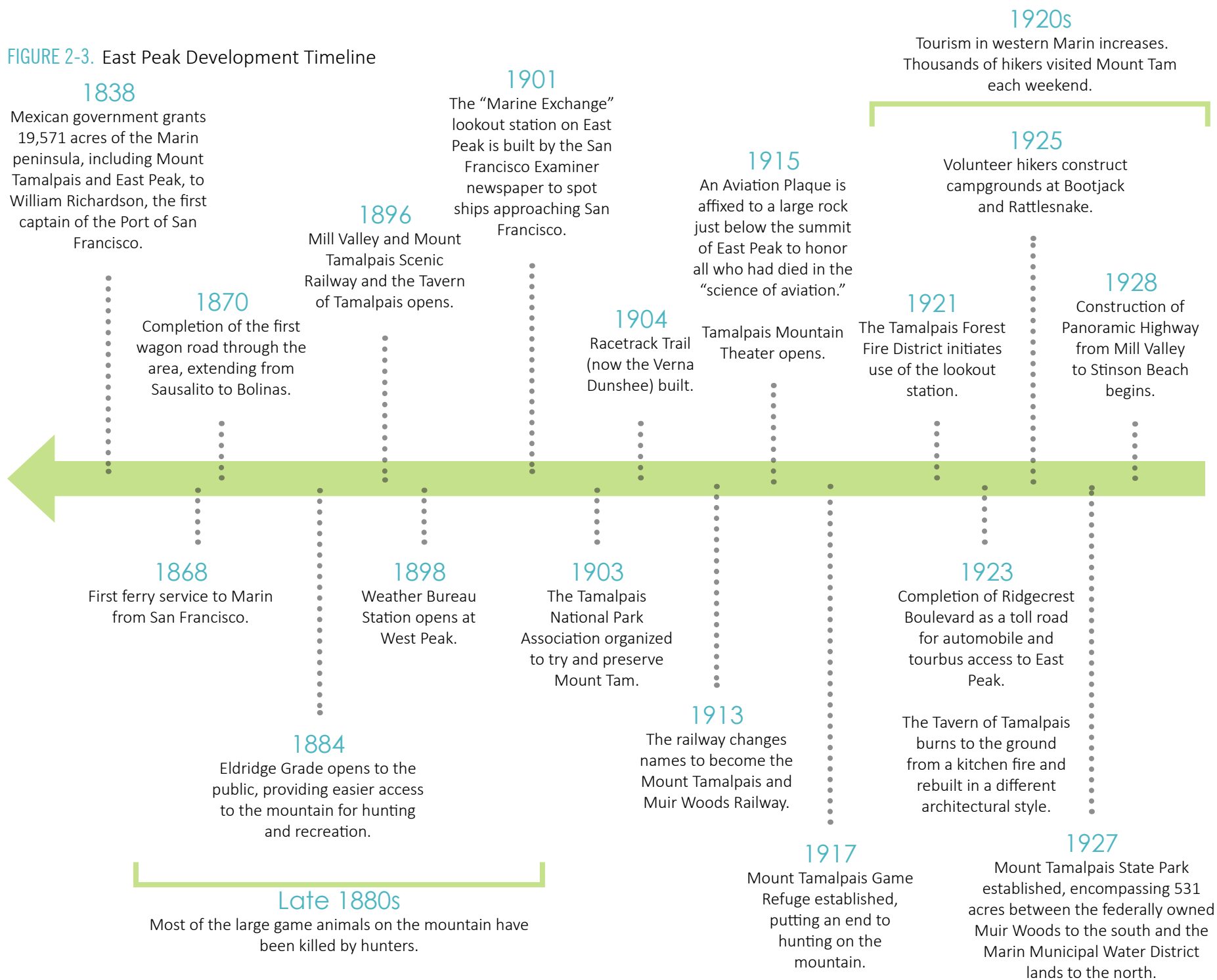
- Agencies and Organizations Involved in Management and Operations of East Peak.** As discussed above, there are several agencies and organizations that own, lease or manage portions of the East Peak Area. These organizations include California State Parks, Marin Municipal Water District, Marin County Fire Department, Marin Fire (lease for Lookout Tower), and Friends of Mt. Tam (staff Visitor Center and Gravity Car Barn).

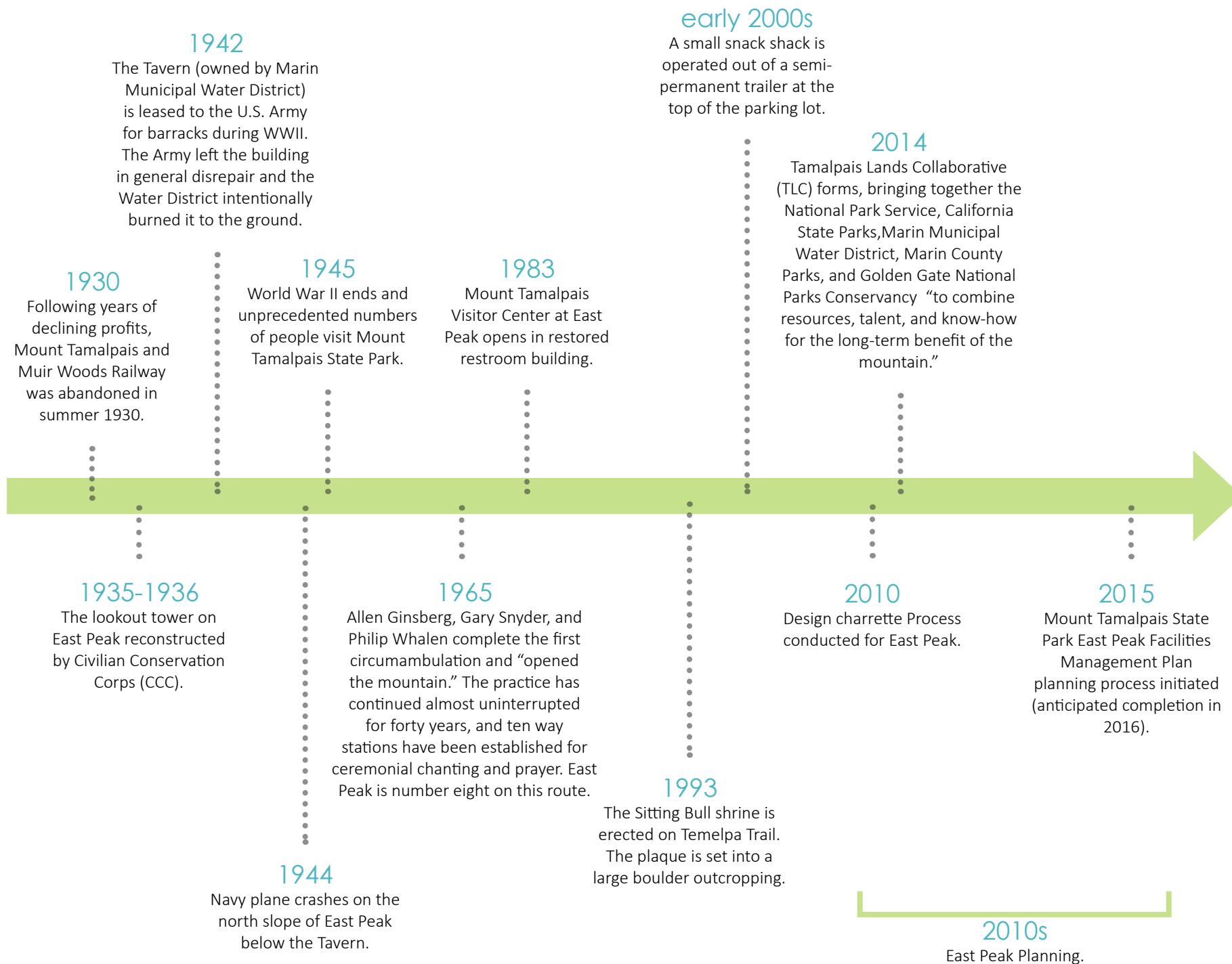


Friends of Mt. Tam Mobile Ranger

- **Members of the Tamalpais Lands Collaborative (TLC).** In 2014, the National Park Service, California State Parks, Marin Municipal Water District, Marin County Parks, and Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy came together to form the Tamalpais Lands Collaborative, establishing a foundation for collaboration and the sharing of resources amongst these key stakeholders. The TLC launched the One Tam campaign in 2015 “to raise awareness about the need to maintain the long-term health of Mt. Tamalpais, engage more volunteers in caring for its treasured resources, and renew the spirit of philanthropy that has been so fundamental to the preservation of Mount Tamalpais over the past century.” Through programs like One Tam, TLC brings together not only key agencies and organizations but engages a broader spectrum of stakeholders.
- **Other Agencies and Organizations.** Other stakeholders include, but are not limited to, the following public agencies and community organizations:
 - » Alpine Club
 - » Audubon Canyon Ranch
 - » Bay Area Open Space Council
 - » Bay Area Ridge Trail Council
 - » California Native Plant Society, Marin Chapter
 - » California State Parks Foundation
 - » Conservation Corps North Bay
 - » Dipsea Race Foundation
 - » Environmental Education Council of Marin
 - » Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria
 - » Friends of China Camp
 - » Latino Outdoors
 - » Marin Agricultural Land Trust
 - » Marin Audubon Society
 - » Marin Conservation League
 - » Marin County Bicycle Coalition
 - » Marin County Parks
 - » Marin County Open Space District
 - » Marin Horse Council
 - » Mill Valley Historical Society
 - » Mount Tam Task Force
 - » Nature Bridge (at the Headlands Center)
 - » Nature Friends Tourist Club San Francisco (German Tourist Club)
 - » Outdoor Afro
 - » Sierra Club of Marin
 - » Tamalpais Conservation Club
 - » West Point Inn Association

FIGURE 2-3. East Peak Development Timeline





RELEVANT PLANS AND DOCUMENTS

A summary of key relevant plans and documents is provided below, organized from Statewide relevance to park-specific. It is important to note there are many other documents that inform the planning process, including those that are referenced within this Atlas and associated Appendices; this section focuses on key documents with overarching relevance.

A New Vision for California State Parks: Recommendations of the Parks Forward Initiative (February 2015)

The Parks Forward Commission (Commission) was established under statute by Governor Jerry Brown to examine the current conditions of the California Parks system and provide recommendations on how to restore the system into a world class asset. During the process, the Commission sought a wide spectrum of input from hundreds of park users, advocates, partners, employees, and many others. The outcome of this process was the fundamental rethinking of the oversight and operations of the system to increase user-ship and expansion of access to reach all Californians.

The initiative envisions the future State Parks system as “a system of parks that expertly protects the state’s iconic landscapes, natural resources, and cultural heritage; is accessible to all Californians; engages younger generations; and promotes the healthy lifestyles and communities that are uniquely Californian,” and recommends specific actions for reaching this vision. Recommended actions that are particularly relevant to Mount Tamalpais State Park and the East Peak Area include:

- Create preservation partnerships to protect and restore historic structures and encourage adaptive reuse where appropriate.
- Improve transportation options to broaden park access, including initiating communications between park and transportation officials to determine how rail and bus resources can expand park access and expanding electric vehicle charging stations.
- Support creation of an integrated network of local, regional, state, tribal, and federal park lands for park users.
- Create digital, multi-lingual communication tools, including social media, that encourage and facilitate park use by providing information on nearby parks, activities, amenities, and transportation options.
- Increase the number and variety of overnight accommodations.
- Expand healthy food options in parks.

The initiative also emphasizes the importance of partnerships between State Parks and other public agencies, and notes the agreement that State Parks signed with the National Park Service, Marin Municipal Water District, Marin County Parks, Marin Open Space District, and Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy to work together for the long-term stewardship of Mount Tamalpais and adjacent lands. This collaborative effort is now referred to as the Tamalpais Lands Collaborative, as described above.

State Parks Visitor Survey (2010)

From October 2007 through February 2009, nearly 10,000 visitors to 26 total State Parks were invited to share their thoughts in informal surveys, which captured their preferences and opinions. A total of 423 visitors responded to this in-person survey

in Mount Tamalpais State Park over that period of time. Responses to open ended questions proved especially valuable in determining programs and activities that were not being offered and in the generation of an action plan to resolve the visitors stated needs.

Responses to the visitor survey at Mount Tamalpais indicated the greatest need regarding programs and activities not currently available was guided walks to help visitors deepen their connection and knowledge of Mount Tamalpais State Park. A close second was a desire by visitors to increase their interaction with Park Rangers. Visitors were also highly interested in increasing the number of signs on trails and directional signs on the roads. Rounding out the top five open ended responses was a request to have a place to buy food.

Based on the feedback provided in the visitor survey, State Parks staff created an Action plan to assess which responses they can resolve immediately, in the near future, and over a multi-year timeframe. The State Parks staff determined two immediate actions they could take. First, was to advertise programs that were already scheduled at places where visitors will see them. Second, was staffing Park Rangers or park aid staff in high trafficked areas, such as East Peak, to provide informal “meet and greet” and question/answer sessions to visitors. In the near future, Mount Tamalpais State Park staff committed to examine the feasibility of increasing the operational hours of the visitor center and concessions.



View of East Peak from East Ridgecrest Boulevard

Over a longer term timeline, State Parks staff planned to explore the feasibility of providing a “comprehensive interpretive plan” for additional programs provided to visitors by State Parks staff and volunteers, self-guided tours where visitors use signs or printed brochures to explore and learn more about Mount Tamalpais, and guided walks provided by both park staff and volunteers that are set to a predetermined schedule. Further, State Parks staff planned to consider adding both campfire and children’s programs to expand opportunities to engage visitors.

Golden Gate General National Recreation Area Muir Woods National Monument General Management Plan (2014)

The legislative boundary for the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) encompasses three national parks (Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Muir Woods National Monument, and Fort Point National Historic Site), as well as adjacent current and future parklands. As Mount Tamalpais State Park is included within the legislative boundary of the GGNRA, the Golden Gate General National Recreation Area Muir Woods National Monument General Management Plan (General Management Plan) is amongst the documents and efforts that influence Mount Tamalpais’s future.

The General Management Plan was updated in 2014 for many reasons, including but not limited to address the expansion of the GGNRA, increased public demand for access, changing demographics, and evolving transportation infrastructure. Plan objectives include fostering a conservation ethic among visitors, preserving and restoring habitat for threatened and endangered species, supporting public transportation as a way to reduce congestion, and

promoting a watershed perspective in land management.

While the Plan focuses on NPS-administered lands, it identifies a regional collaborative approach to open space preservation and recreation use that is consistent with efforts of the TLC. In addition, the Plan identifies broad goals and management strategies that can inform and/or affect management strategies for Mount Tamalpais State Park. For instance, the Muir Woods shuttle and intelligent transportation systems are identified as strategies for sustainable, multimodal access to park sites, and multiple potential strategies for addressing user capacity issues at Muir Woods are discussed.

Mount Tamalpais State Park General Plan (1980)

The Mount Tamalpais State Park General Plan (General Plan) is the guiding document for management and development within Mount Tamalpais State Park. The General Plan includes the following Declaration of Purpose for Mount Tamalpais State Park as approved by the State Park and Recreation Commission in January, 1965:

“The purpose of Mount Tamalpais State Park is to make available to the people for their inspiration and enjoyment, the outstanding scenic, natural and recreational values of this majestic mountain climax of Marin County, with its steep chaparral-covered slopes, forested ravines, traditional winding trails, and spectacular marine views, overlooking yet seemingly remote from the densely-populated cities on San Francisco Bay. Stipulations in the deeds to key parcels of the property require preservation of natural conditions and limitations on developments on these parcels.

“The function of the Division of Beaches and Parks at Mount Tamalpais State Park is to manage, reserve and protect its varied resources and values for their perpetuation in accordance with the park purpose; to interpret these values effectively; and to provide such facilities and services, consistent with the purpose of the park, as are necessary for the full enjoyment of the park by the people.”

The General Plan identifies the Fire Lookout Tower as well as the foundations of the Tavern of Tamalpais and remains of several small structures as among the chief cultural resources found within the park, as further discussed in Appendix B of Existing Conditions Report. In addition, the General Plan identifies the rare quartz-tourmaline rock which makes up most of East Peak as a resource of Statewide significance, and notes promontory views as scenic resources. General Plan policies guide the protection of park resources, including the ones mentioned here. Policies that are particularly relevant to the East Peak Area and informative to the FMP planning process include:

- **Mineralogical and Paleontological Site Protection.** The site at East Peak containing the rare quartz-tourmaline rock shall be protected from degradation.
- **Aesthetic Resources.** The special scenic resources of the park shall be protected from all degrading and undesirable intrusions. Structures in the park shall be sensitively designed and located so they blend with their surroundings.



Lookout Tower

- **Aesthetic Resources.** Powerlines and other detracting installations shall be kept as unobtrusive as possible. Such intrusions as do exist shall be moved as soon as practical.
- **Aesthetic Resources.** Signs shall be kept to a minimum, strategically located, and in the best of taste.
- **Cultural Resources.** The CCC fire lookout tower at East Peak shall remain in service for the county, and the fire department shall be encouraged to perform necessary maintenance on the structure to ensure its continued rustic appearance. Should the county discontinue its use of the tower, the department shall maintain it as a historic structure and public viewing facility.
- **Cultural Resources.** Foundations of the Tavern of Tamalpais shall be maintained. The area could be filled to help preserve the foundations until further study of them can be made.
- **Cultural Resources.** Qualified historical archeologists shall study the debris remains of the tavern to gain insight into late nineteenth and early twentieth century life in the area. Park staff shall be educated about the need to keep the whereabouts of the debris confidential.
- **Cultural Resources.** Roadbeds for early railroad and stage lines shall continue to be maintained and used as hiking trails.

The General Plan identifies seven Allowable Use Intensity Classes, with East Peak falling within Class C: Destination Use-Possible Restrictions. This classification means that while the area is suitable for destination uses, there are factors that constrain use and limitation to type and density of use and associated facilities may apply.

Recommendations for East Peak

In regards to facilities at East Peak, the General Plan proposes the following for East Peak:

- Increase picnic units to 15.
- Increase designated parking spaces to 120.
- Improve landscaping.
- Redesign entry road that eliminates hazardous conflicts between cars and pedestrians.
- Placement of fill material on the tavern ruins, keeping them intact for historic purposes, but overcoming unsightliness.
- Landscape around existing comfort station to have it blend with the surroundings.
- Evaluation of all trails, and upgrades as required.
- Retention of the existing portable concessions facility (food service).

The General Plan also recommends a study to investigate the feasibility of providing a shuttle to East Peak from Diaz Ridge and/or Rock Springs, with the intent of reducing weekend traffic.

Recreation Assessment Mount Tamalpais State Park (2010)

The Recreation Assessment prepared for the park by the State Parks Planning Division in 2010 included a review of attendance statistics from 1996 to 2007 for the entire Mount Tamalpais State Park. The estimates ranged dramatically; from approximately 1 million per year in 1996 to over 2 million per year just three years later, and plunging to 0.5 million per year four years after that. The estimates for the most recent five years available, from 2003 to 2007 hovered around 500,000 per year for the entire park. In the field of outdoor recreation planning, variations this dramatic are generally due more to differences in the way staff do the estimating than to actual surges and collapses in visitation, and the Recreation Assessment suggested that was the reason for the attendance trend they reported.

The recreation assessment compiled a list of five observations and recommendations, including;

- Preparation of a Master Plan for East Peak.
- Coordinated interpretation of the natural and cultural history of East Peak.
- Upgrading the structure, façade, American with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance, and products offered in the concession stands.
- Improving the visitor's center physical appearance, including new interpretive panels or signs, a new façade, and the replacement of the "A" type roof.
- Researching the feasibility of rebuilding the restaurant and hotel at the Tavern at Tamalpais site.

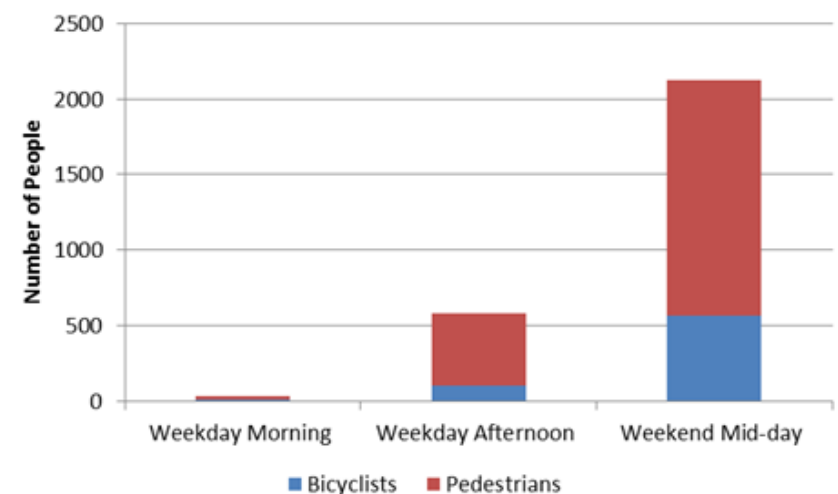
Mount Tamalpais Watershed Road and Trail Management Plan (2005)

MMWD's Mount Tamalpais Watershed Road and Trail Management Plan defines the official system of roads and trails within the Marin Municipal Water District lands and guides the protection of watershed resources through appropriate road and trail management. Official trails within or connecting to the East Peak Area identified in the Plan include Temelpa Trail, Eldridge Grade, North Knee Trail, Verna Dunshee Trail, and the Plank Trail/Lookout Tower Trail (although the latter three trails are mapped but not named). All of these trails are identified as Moderate-High Use hiking trails (Class VII), with the exception of a short connector trail from Verna Dunshee to Eldridge Grade that is identified as Low-Moderate Use Hiking Trail (Class VIII). Standards identified within this plan apply to these trails; as Verna Dunshee is managed by State Parks, coordination with State Parks standards is pertinent.

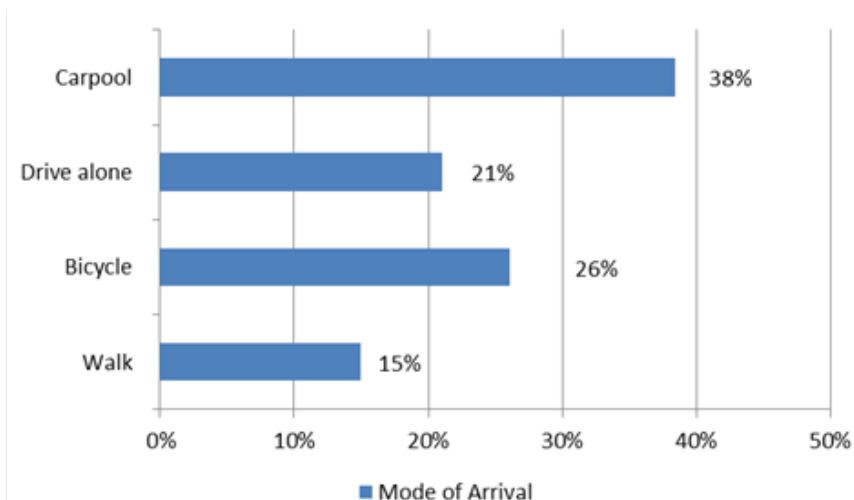
2012-2013 Mount Tamalpais Visitor Use Census and Survey

The "2012-2013 Mount Tamalpais Visitor Use Census and Survey" conducted by the Marin Municipal Water District featured 13,098 visitors counted at 21 locations throughout the MMWD lands, over four time periods/year, including both weekday and weekend, with morning, noon and evening observations. As one of the sites for census and survey was East

FIGURE 2-4. East Peak Activity by Time



Source: MMWD 2012-2013 Mount Tamalpais Visitor Center Use Census and Survey

FIGURE 2-5. Mode of Arrival at East Peak Parking Lot

Source: MMWD 2012-2013 Mount Tamalpais Visitor Center Use Census and Survey

Peak, the results of the survey are described in this section as relevant to East Peak and conclusions are made by Land Economics Consultants (LEC) for PlaceWorks.

Among the 21 sites surveyed, East Peak was found to have the greatest overall visitor activity, most pedestrian activity, and second most bicycle activity. For sake of comparison, other sites found to be highly visited within the MMWD lands included Phoenix Lake/ Natalie Coffin Greene, and Sky Oaks.

People at East Peak were counted as “pedestrians” once they were out of their cars. This count would include people who hiked up the mountain to East Peak from vehicles parked elsewhere or directly from their homes, as well as people who drove to the East Peak parking lot. A separate count was kept for “bicyclists,” including those on both road and mountain bicycles. The average counts during the census periods at East Peak were found to be:

- 172 pedestrians/hour.
- 57 bicyclists/hour.
- 0 equestrians/hour.
- 3 dogs/hour.

Seasonality of Visitation and Weekday/Weekend Patterns

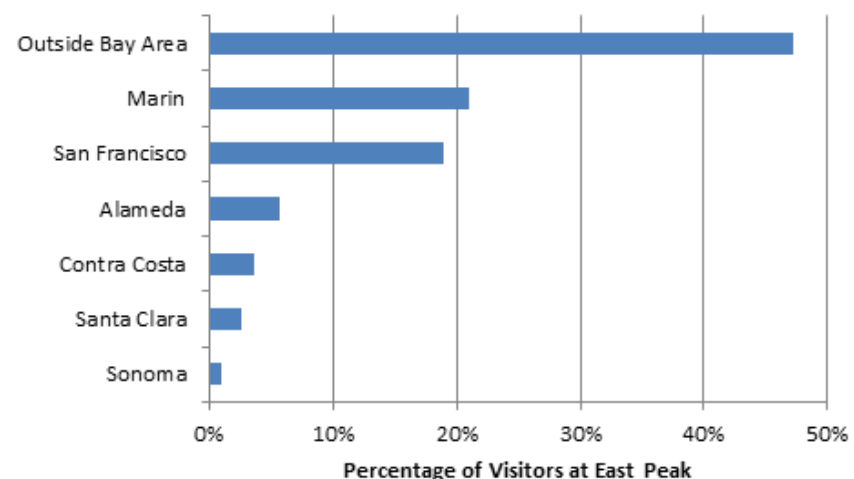
The MMWD census of visitors confirmed the anecdotal visitation patterns reported by State Parks staff. Over the 28 hours of counting, MMWD surveyors found 2,743 visitors at East Peak. Visitation is heavily skewed to weekends, with weekend mid-day visitation being 3 to 4 times that occurring during weekday mornings or afternoons, as shown in Figure 2-4. However, visitation at East Peak does not vary dramatically by season, and similar numbers of people are finding their way to East Peak year round.

Mode of Arrival

Not surprisingly, the majority of East Peak visitors arrived in private vehicles, some driving alone (26 percent) but most in cars with multiple passengers (38 percent). More surprising given the 2,500 foot elevation, is that 26 percent of visitors biked to the top, and another 15 percent hiked up from somewhere lower on the mountain. This pattern suggests East Peak is a popular destination for a work out. The results are shown in Figure 2-5.

Visitor Origin

The survey also investigated where people came from and described their results in the following way: “This site is considered a destination site. Accordingly, the home zip codes provided by respondents reflect a range of origins. In fact, more East Peak visitors were from

FIGURE 2-6. Origin of East Peak Visitors

Source: MMWD 2012-2013 Mount Tamalpais Visitor Center Use Census and Survey

outside the nine county Bay Area (92) than at any other survey site. Marin residents were still the largest overall contingent (41), but another 37 respondents were residents of San Francisco County. They were followed by residents of Alameda (11), Contra Costa (7), Santa Clara (5), and Sonoma (2).” East Peak also had the highest percentage of first time visitors (14%) of the 21 sites surveyed, suggesting it is a popular spot to bring out-of-town guests to see the view, and contributing to the number of people from beyond the nine county Bay Area. The results are shown in Figure 2-6.

Trip Motivations

Respondents to the survey were also asked what primary activities were motivating their trip to East Peak on that day. Multiple responses were allowed. The results are presented in Figure 2-7.

The pattern that emerges from the data presented as well as conversations with State Parks staff is one of relatively short stays, motivated by either the physical activity of getting outdoors, or the opportunity to get to the top of the mountain to take in the view. State Parks staff report that very few special events are programmed for the East Peak Area, primarily due to its remote “cul-de-sac” type of location, small parking capacity, and its lack of supporting facilities. Some special events, such as the Marin Century bike ride, will incorporate East Peak as part of its itinerary, but not as a major destination.

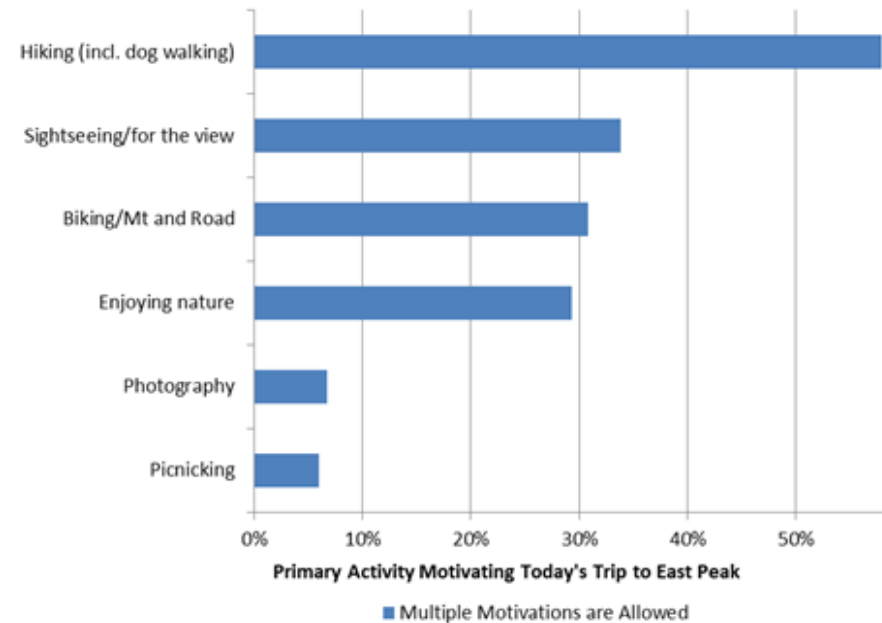
2010-2011 EAST PEAK PLANNING PROCESS

State Parks initiated a planning process for East Peak in 2010 in response to the recommendations of the 2010 Recreation Assessment described above. The process included a design charrette, the development of concept drawings, and public workshops, as described below. As discussed in Chapter 1, the recommendations of the process were to develop a Facilities Management Plan for East Peak. This section provides an overview of the planning process based on the Draft Summary of the 2010-2011 East Peak Planning Process (January 2012).

DESIGN CHARRETTE AND GENERATION OF DESIGN CONCEPTS

In 2010, CSP invited volunteer landscape architects and planners, along with staff from State Parks and National Park Service, to participate in a one-day design charrette to envision improvements for visitor facilities at East Peak. The charrette generated multiple concepts for East Peak, which were presented to targeted stakeholders at the end of the day. Organizations that supported the effort included Mount Tamalpais Interpretive Association, National Park Service-Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (NPS-RTCA), and the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA).

FIGURE 2-7. Motivation for Trip to East Peak



Source: MMWD 2012-2013 Mount Tamalpais Visitor Center Use Census and Survey



Plan Drawing from 2010 Design Charrette

PRELIMINARY CONCEPT DRAWINGS

Working from the numerous concepts generated at the charrette, State Parks and NPS-RTCA staff developed three unique concepts to be shared at a series of three public workshops. The concepts were developed to reflect three different levels of recreation/development intensity, and referred to as: (1) Low Intensity, (2) Medium Intensity, and (3) High Intensity. However, all of the concepts concentrated active uses in proximity to the parking area; consolidated structures into one building; restored paved areas to native vegetation; and reduced parking capacity to 40-60 stalls.

During the public comment process (series of meetings), State Parks made several revisions to the concepts based on comments received from participants. Additional viewing areas, dispersed lodging, and the Lookout Tower and Plank Trail were included in the concepts.

Public Workshops and Outcomes

State Parks presented the concepts at three public workshops in order to gather input, including comments, concerns, questions, and ideas, and to gauge potential public support. Approximately 45 members of the public participated in the workshops. While participants generally supported the idea of improvements at East Peak, the Summary reported a range of opinions on the level of development that would be appropriate for that location. For instance, the concept of overnight lodging was enthusiastically embraced by some, yet strongly opposed by others.

CONCURRENT PLANNING PROCESSES

WEST PEAK FEASIBILITY STUDY

West Peak was razed in 1950 to build an Air Force station. The station was closed in 1980, and West Peak is owned by MMWD and is closed to public access, with the exception of use for overflow parking during large events at Mountain Theatre. The restoration of West Peak was called for within a 1986 Environmental Assessment, and many groups have since expressed support for this vision.

TLC, including MMWD as landowner, plans to conduct a feasibility study to determine how and to what condition West Peak should be restored. It is anticipated that the study would begin in 2015, involve substantial outreach, and be completed within six to eight months. Since the planning processes for West Peak and East Peak will both be underway in 2015, thoughtful coordination has the potential to lead to successful, cohesive programming at Mount Tamalpais' peaks.

ENGINE #9 ACQUISITION EFFORTS

Friends of Mt. Tam is currently pursuing the acquisition of Engine #9, a former engine for the Mount Tamalpais to Muir Woods

Railway, with the intent of locating the engine at East Peak in proximity to the Gravity Car Barn. It is anticipated that inclusion of the engine at East Peak would increase the number of railroad enthusiasts that visit East Peak. The FMP will need to consider potential implications on this acquisition to site organization, programming, and visitation.

MARKET CONTEXT

The East Peak FMP will consider economic implications of potential enhancements. This section provides an economic context for planning based on the Market Overview Report prepared by LEC as part of the planning process and included in Appendix D. This section provides an overview of the market being attracted to East Peak, and budget resources that are available to operate and maintain facilities at East Peak.

INDICATORS OF TOTAL VISITATION TO EAST PEAK

Mount Tamalpais State Park is highly accessible, by hikers and bicyclists from nearby neighborhoods as well as by vehicle. During operating hours, the park is also essentially ungated. As such, there is no convenient way of counting visitors to the park and estimates vary.

For planning purposes, if one assumes that perhaps half of all visitors to Mount Tamalpais State Park make it all the way to the parking lot of East Peak, an estimate of approximately 400,000 per year is established, based on the Recreation Assessment study from 2010. This is roughly consistent with an average daily traffic count on East Ridgecrest Boulevard documented in Appendix A.

PATTERNS OF VISITS TO EAST PEAK

State Parks staff report that the parking lot, which includes 85 parking spaces, is much more heavily used on weekends than on weekdays, but it is rarely full. Even during weekend and holiday periods of peak demand, the parking lot is generally adequate in part because the current length-of-stay by visitors is relatively short. This in turn is a product of the number of things to do around the summit. Many people merely drive to the top, look at the view, and drive back down. Longer stays might include a hike on the Verna Dunshee Trail, or a scramble to the summit at Gardner Lookout. On weekends when the Visitor Center is open, this interpretive facility may extend the average length of stay somewhat.

There are interrelationships between East Peak and other destinations in the region. For instance, Friends of Mt. Tam staff in the Visitor Center reported that the number of tourists they saw was reduced when the shuttle to Muir Woods started because prior to the shuttle some people would rent cars and include both destinations in their day trip. Other insight into the patterns of visitation to East Peak may be gleaned from the “2012-2013 Mount Tamalpais Visitor Use Census and Survey,” described above.

As a result of the patterns described above, including the findings of the 2012-2013 Mount Tamalpais Visitor Use Census and



View to Temelpa Trail from Verna Dunshee Trail

Survey, it appears that there are rarely more than a hundred or so people present in the East Peak area at any one time. A maximum people at one time (PAOT) may be inferred from the size of the parking lot. If the lot is briefly full on a weekend afternoon, there could be 200 to 250 people in the area who arrived by vehicle. If the same proportions of hikers and bikers were present as was found in the survey, this would imply approximately 400 people would be at East Peak simultaneously. Given the short length of stay on average, however, the parking lot would soon turn over a few spaces, and the number of people on site would likely decline again.

STATE PARKS REVENUES AND ONGOING OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE COMMITMENTS

An overview of the fiscal situation for Mount Tamalpais State Park is provided by the annual statistical reports prepared by State Parks, summarized in Appendix D. Like most of the park units in the Marin District, Mount Tamalpais State Park generates the vast majority of its revenue through user fees, such as camping and cabin rental fees at Steep Ravine. The only Marin District park unit that generates significant concessionaire revenue is Angel Island due to the ferry boat operations that enhance public access to the island. Total revenues generated at Mount Tamalpais have been just under \$700,000 per year.

The costs of operating Mount Tamalpais State Park is \$2,144,937.² As with virtually all public parks, the single largest cost item is for staffing, at just over a million dollars a year at Mount Tamalpais State Park. East Peak is managed and operated as part of the larger Mount Tamalpais State Park, which in turn shares many State Parks staff with the other state park units in the Marin District. Senior State Parks staff spend time dealing with all seven units in their district. A total of three full-time equivalent (FTE) positions of Maintenance staff are dedicated to Mount Tamalpais State Park and staff are present at East Peak at times on a daily basis, 365 days per year, attending to the restroom and grounds. Visitor Services staff include East Peak in their routine patrols, open and close gates, and periodically empty the “iron ranger” parking fee collection device.

In addition to the operating costs of staff, there are operating expenses for such things as fuel for vehicles, electrical bills, supplies for the restrooms, and trash pickup. Operating expenses for Mount Tamalpais run around \$300,000 per year. In addition to ongoing operating and expense costs, budgets also include “Category 1 Monies” that cover one-time capital projects and significant periodic maintenance needs such as roof replacement for a structure.

As is the case in most park systems around the country, revenues generated within a specific park do not necessarily get spent within that park, and very few State Parks park units are “profitable.” Revenues generated at Mount Tamalpais State Park through such sources as user fees (e.g., parking fees at East Peak or camp site rentals at Steep Ravine) and concession revenues (e.g., a new snack shack at East Peak) flow to Sacramento where budgeting is conducted for the entire system. Allocations of budget resources to cover direct and indirect costs of park operations are made above the level of the individual park, at the state and district levels where the broader needs of the park system can be considered and balanced.

At the moment, the State is enjoying tax revenue collections from the 2014/15 income tax payment season that are running ahead of budget projections. The majority of this surplus, however, is structured to flow to California’s schools and to such

² California State Park System Statistical Report 2013/2014 Fiscal Year

specific uses as a rainy day fund. In spite of state budget prospects looking up at the moment, the fiscal situation for State Parks in recent years has been one of constrained budgets. For example, in the Marin District the Category 1 funds recently have been cut below what they were the previous year. At this time, State Parks does not have money available for significant new capital projects at East Peak.

For projects that are highly visible, such as something that clearly adds to the visitor experience, it may be possible to raise capital funding through partnerships. Such partners, however, are rarely interested in funding the ongoing maintenance of state-owned facilities. If new facilities emerge from the Facilities Management Plan that increase the maintenance obligations of State Parks, there will have to be some corresponding increase in the budgets for FTE permanent employees and operating expenses. An alternative is that if some new facility were able to generate sufficient revenue, such as through a concession agreement, it may be possible that a private operator of the new facility could also be tasked with the responsibility for its ongoing maintenance, which is discussed in the next section.

CONCESSION ECONOMICS AT EAST PEAK: RECENT HISTORY AND POTENTIAL

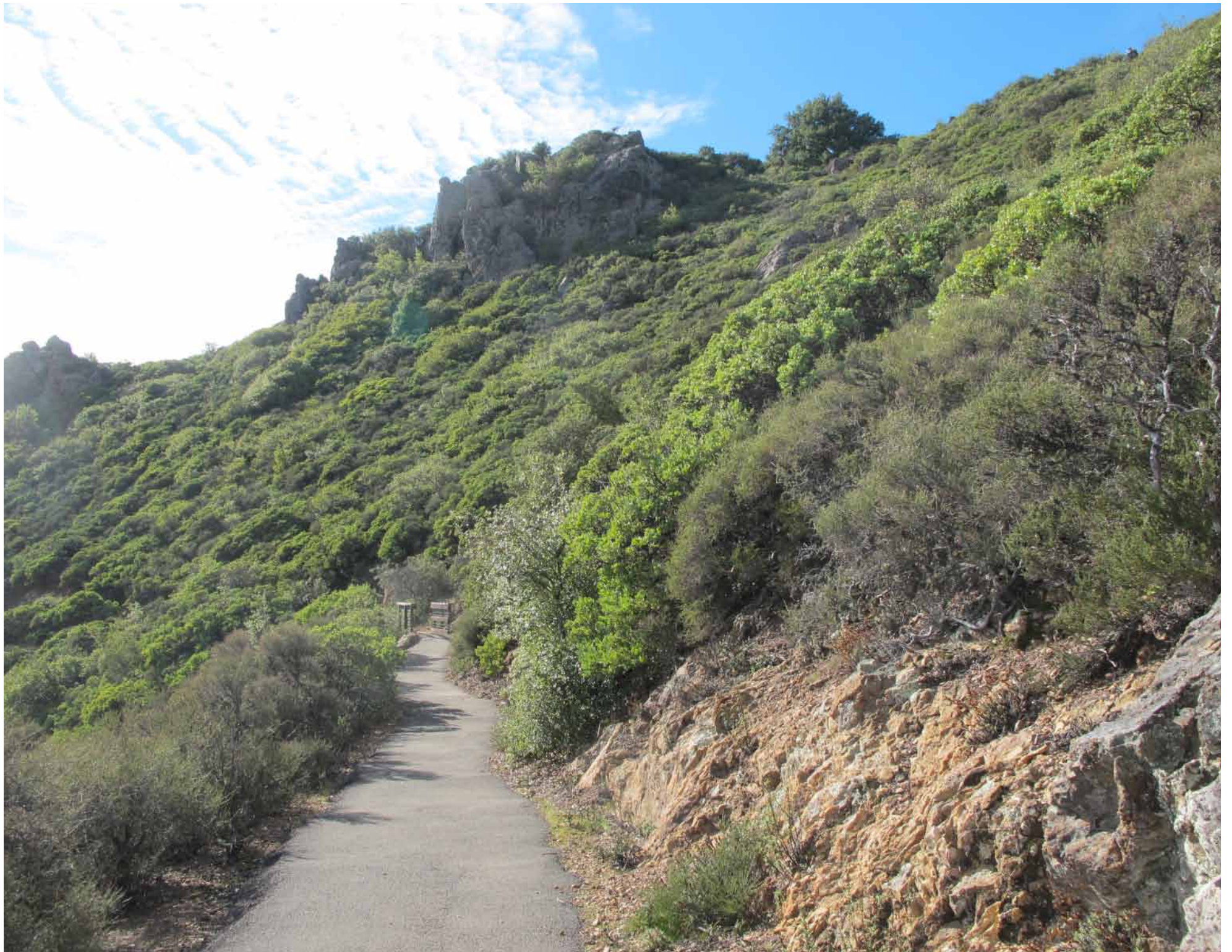
There is a long history of commercial uses at East Peak, as described above. Recognizing the visitor serving value of small scale food and beverage service for those who find their way to the top of East Peak, State Parks has tried to attract a concession operation. The most recent operator utilized a modified trailer to serve basic snacks and beverages at spot near the top of the parking lot. The business opportunities are almost entirely on weekends, and the distances required to staff and supply even a “snack shack” are long. The most recent operator was having difficulty generating enough revenue to cover expenses, and could not keep the operation open as many hours as State Parks desired, did not maintain the quality of the premises, and ultimately ceased operations through mutual agreement with State Parks.

At the moment, the only food and beverage visitor service is a vending machine purchased by the Friends of Mt. Tam installed on the side of the restroom building. The State Parks Maintenance Division extended utilities to accommodate the vending machine, and has also made some utility improvements in the plaza area to facilitate hook ups by a food truck.

In the series of workshops and design charrettes held between 2010 and 2011 described above, some of the potential uses discussed for East Peak had the potential to generate revenues. Whether they have the potential to generate enough revenues to pay their operating costs and amortize the costs of development is another matter and would require further feasibility study on a case by case basis.



Vending Machine and Mount Tamalpais Model



3. EXISTING RESOURCES

East Peak's geologic history and existing natural and cultural resources are largely responsible for East Peak becoming the destination it is today. This chapter provides a photographic site tour that provides site orientation, followed by an overview of existing geologic, biologic, cultural, and visual resources. Existing facilities and use patterns are directly connected to these resources, and are discussed separately in Chapter Four.

SITE TOUR

A photographic site tour of East Peak is provided in Figure 3.1. The figure includes numbers that illustrate the approximate location of the corresponding image.

The purpose of Figure 3.1 and associated photographs is to provide context and serve as general reference for the discussion of resources provided in this chapter as well as the discussion of facilities and infrastructure provided in Chapter Four. The images include an overview of the arrival area, the plaza area and junction point, the route around the Verna Dunshee Trail, and views from the Lookout Tower at the top of East Peak.



Entrance View (Lower Lot)



Entrance View (Upper Lot)



Directional Signage at Road to Plaza Area



San Francisco and Mill Valley Watershed View



Plaza Area



Visitor Center (Below Grade)



Picnic Area North of Visitor Center

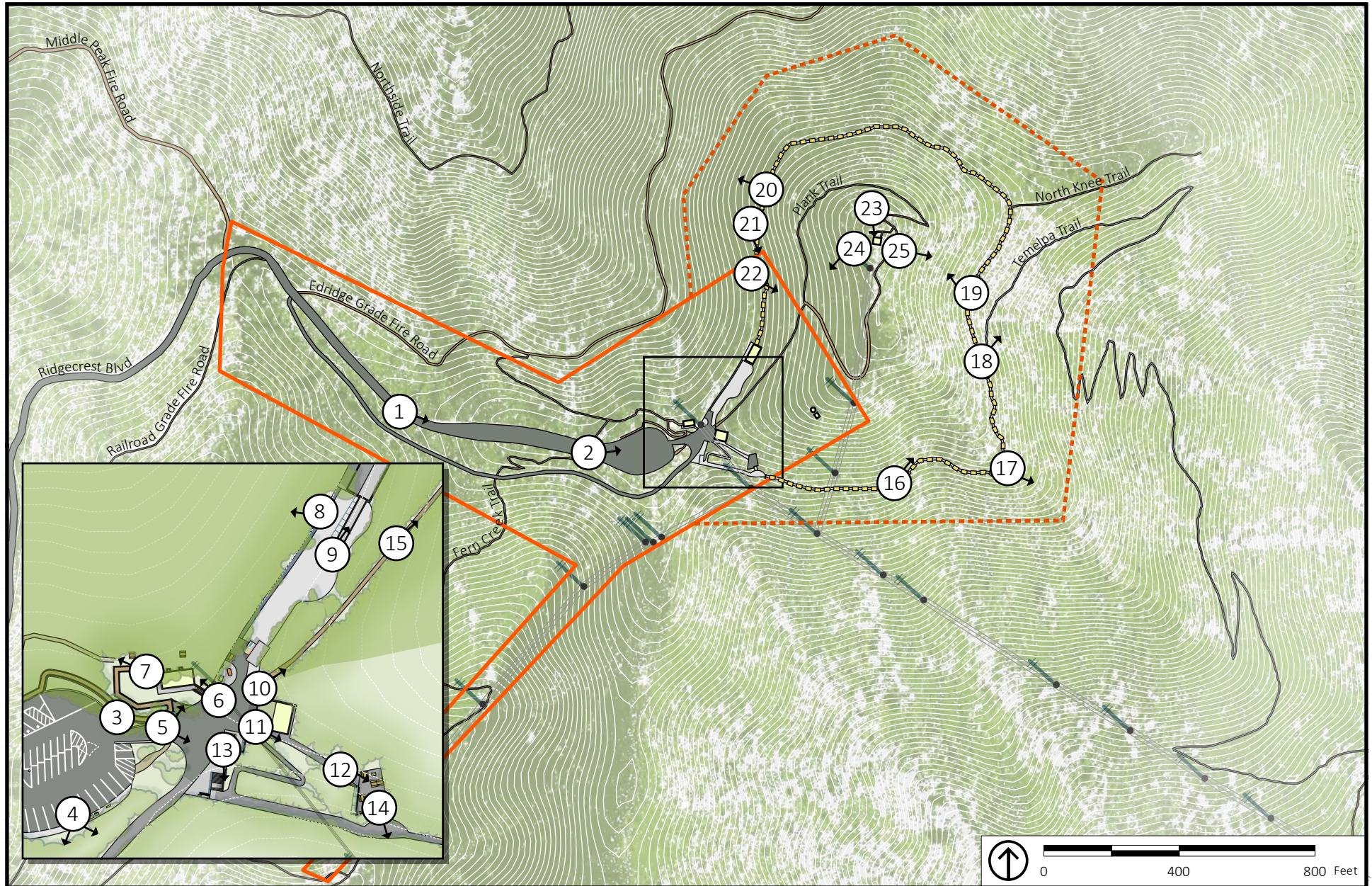


Lagunitas Watershed View



Gravity Barn

FIGURE 3-1. Site Overview



Source: California State Parks 2014, PlaceWorks, 2015

- | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|---------------------|--|--------------|--|--------------|--|-------------------------------|
| | East Peak Use Area (State Parks Owned and Maintained) | | East Peak Use Area (MMWD Owned and Joint Management) | | Verna Dunshee Trail | | Utility Line | | 10' Contours | | Photo Locations and Direction |
| | Other Trails | | Utility Pole | | | | | | | | |



Trailhead for Plank Trail



Verna Dunshee Trailhead



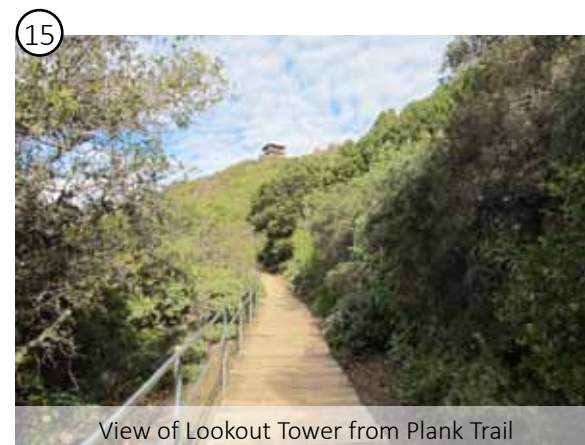
Picnic Area East of Restroom



Stair to Verna Dunshee/Foundation of Historic Tavern



Faded Interpretive Sign Overlooking Views to South



View of Lookout Tower from Plank Trail



Southern Section of Verna Dunshee Trail



Overlook on Verna Dunshee Trail



Temelpa Trail Junction with Verna Dunshee Trail

19



Benches along Verna Dunshee Trail

20



Memorial and View North from Verna Dunshee Trail

21



Northern Section of Verna Dunshee Trail

22



Rock Splitting Tie

23



Lookout Tower

24



View of Parking Area and Facilities from Lookout Tower

25



View East and South from Lookout Tower

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

This section provides a brief overview of soil, geologic, and water resources.

- Climate.** The regional climate is characterized by dry, warm summers and cool wet winters, moderated by the proximity of the Pacific Ocean and presence of coastal fog. However, there are numerous microclimates on Mount Tamalpais due to topography and exposure. For instance, annual precipitation ranges from 27.5 to 31.5 inches around Mount Tamalpais.¹ Weather at East Peak tends to be more extreme than surrounding areas due to high exposure and elevation. East Peak is often above the fog that covers lower areas of the park during summer months, yet can experience windy, cold conditions during the winter months.
- Topography.** The East Peak Area includes the East Peak and associated slopes with elevations that range from approximately 2,220 to 2,570 feet above sea level. With the exception of developed areas, including the site of the parking lot and the railroad grade, the East Peak Area is dominated by relatively steep slopes.
- Geologic Resources and Soil.** The formation of Mount Tamalpais is believed to be associated with movement along the San Andreas Fault, as well as erosion. Rock types present on the mountain include sandstone (graywacke), shale, greenstone, chert, quartz, tourmaline, and green serpentine.² Quartz-tourmaline rock makes up most of East Peak, and is identified by the Mount Tamalpais State Park General Plan as a resource of Statewide significance to be protected from degradation. In addition, the General Plan identifies rare quartz-tourmaline rock, which makes up most of East Peak as a resource of Statewide significance. The two soil types found on East Peak, Maymen-Maymen (hf2k) and Tocaloma-McMullin (hf3p), form the dominant soil types throughout the upper elevation areas of Mount Tamalpais State Park. Neither of these soil types are considered to be hydric, or saturated with water.
- Water Resources.** East Peak is located at the junction of three watersheds, including Lagunitas Creek watershed to the northwest, Ross Valley watershed to the northeast, and Mill Valley watershed to the south. The north slopes of Middle Peak and West Peak are also part of the Lagunitas Watershed, but the south slopes of Middle Peak and West Peak are within the Redwood Creek watershed. Three creeks are located on East Peak: the east fork of Fern Creek, Lagunitas Creek, and an unnamed tributary of Lagunitas Creek. As shown in Figure 3.2, the creeks are predominately ephemeral and intermittent near the higher areas of East Peak, but become perennial as they continue down the mountain. Potable and domestic water supply systems are discussed in Chapter 4, Infrastructure and Facilities.

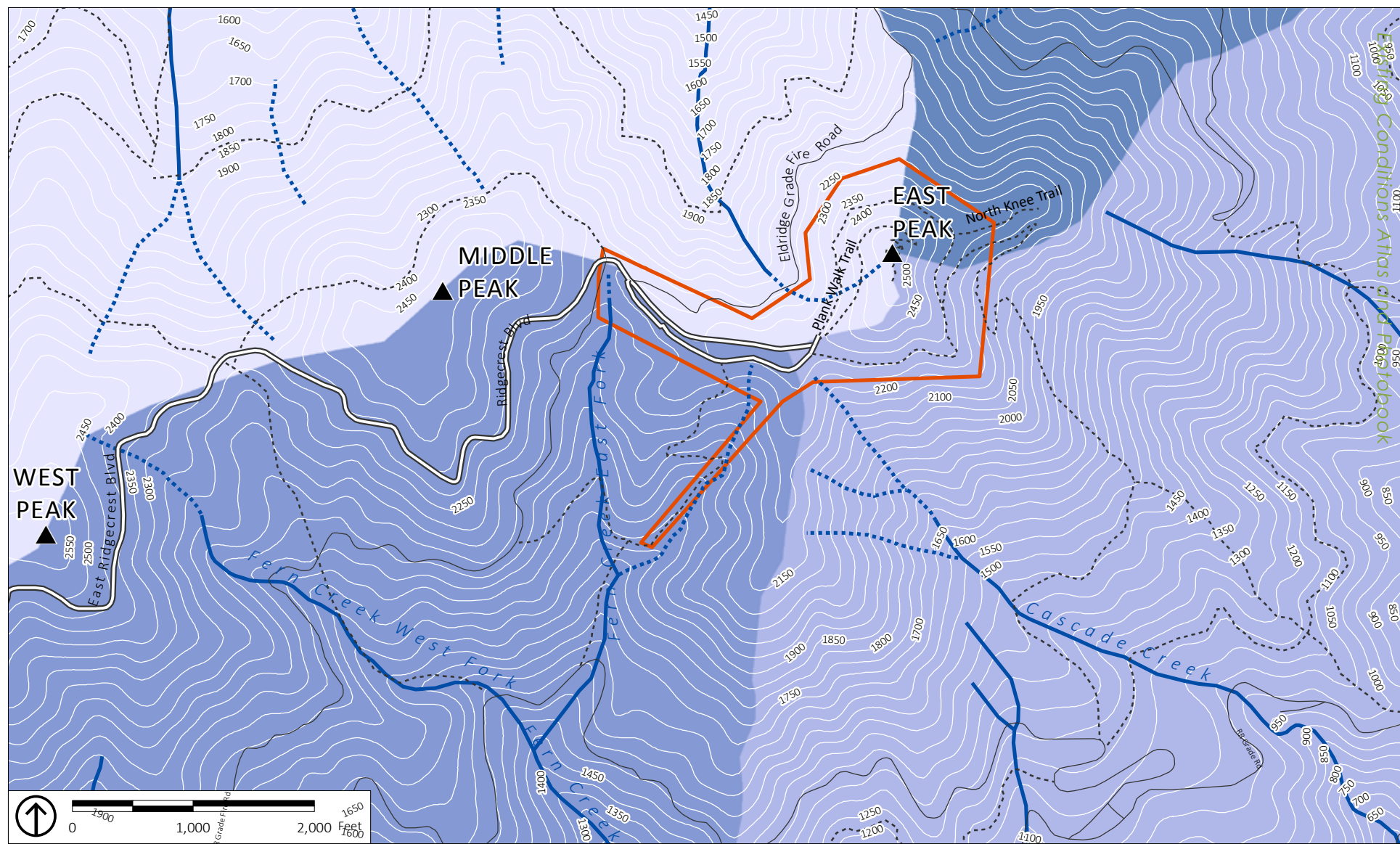


Verna Dunshee Trail

1 San Francisco State University, SFSU Bay Area Rainfall Map, <http://tornado.sfsu.edu/geosciences/classes/m356/graphics/BayAreaRainfall.jpg>.

2 Friends of Mt. Tam, <http://www.friendsofmonttam.org/park/facts.html>, accessed May 12 2015.

FIGURE 3-2. East Peak Watersheds



Source: California State Parks 2014, PlaceWorks, 2015

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| East Peak Use Area | ⋯ Ephemeral and Intermittent Streams | Watersheds | Vehicular Roads |
| — Perennial Streams | | LAGUNITAS CREEK | Fire Roads |
| | | MILL VALLEY | Trails |
| | | REDWOOD CREEK | |
| | | ROSS VALLEY | |

Implications for the Facilities Management Plan

The environmental setting of East Peak has informed existing development and recreational uses, and will continue to define parameters for potential development and uses. For instance, the Facilities Management Plan (FMP) will need to ensure protection of sensitive abiotic resources such as quartz tourmaline and water. Protection of water quality is especially important, as the East Peak Use Area drains into Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD) lands in which protection of water resources is of utmost importance.

BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Below is a summary of the site's biological and habitat resources, based upon the site background information and site survey conducted by Blackhawk Environmental, Inc. (Blackhawk). A full report of their methodology and findings can be found in Appendix C.

DOMINANT BIOTIC HABITATS

The four vegetation communities/land use types found at East Peak are shown in Figure 3.2 and include the following:

Chaparral

Chaparral generally occurs on dry slopes and alluvial fans below 6,000 feet and forms dense stands to 3 meters in height. Chaparral is dominated by low growing to tall, fire-adapted, evergreen shrubs and/or small trees with waxy or sclerotized leaves. The mosaic of shrubs and small trees forms dense stands on slopes and in canyon bottoms that face all directions; however, slopes that face north or northeast typically are often more dense than those that face to the south and west.

On East Peak, Chaparral is the most common habitat type and occurs on all slopes and canyon bottoms. With no sign of any recent fire at East Peak, the Chaparral remains thick and often times impenetrable outside of the established trails. Dominant plant species include Eastwood manzanita (*Arctostaphylos glandulosa* ssp. *glandulosa*), chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*) and buck brush (*Ceanothus cuneatus* var. *ramulosa*). Shrub heights generally range from 1 to 4 meters. Approximately 39.36 acres of Chaparral occurs onsite, or 74 percent of the total survey area.

Oak/Bay Woodland.

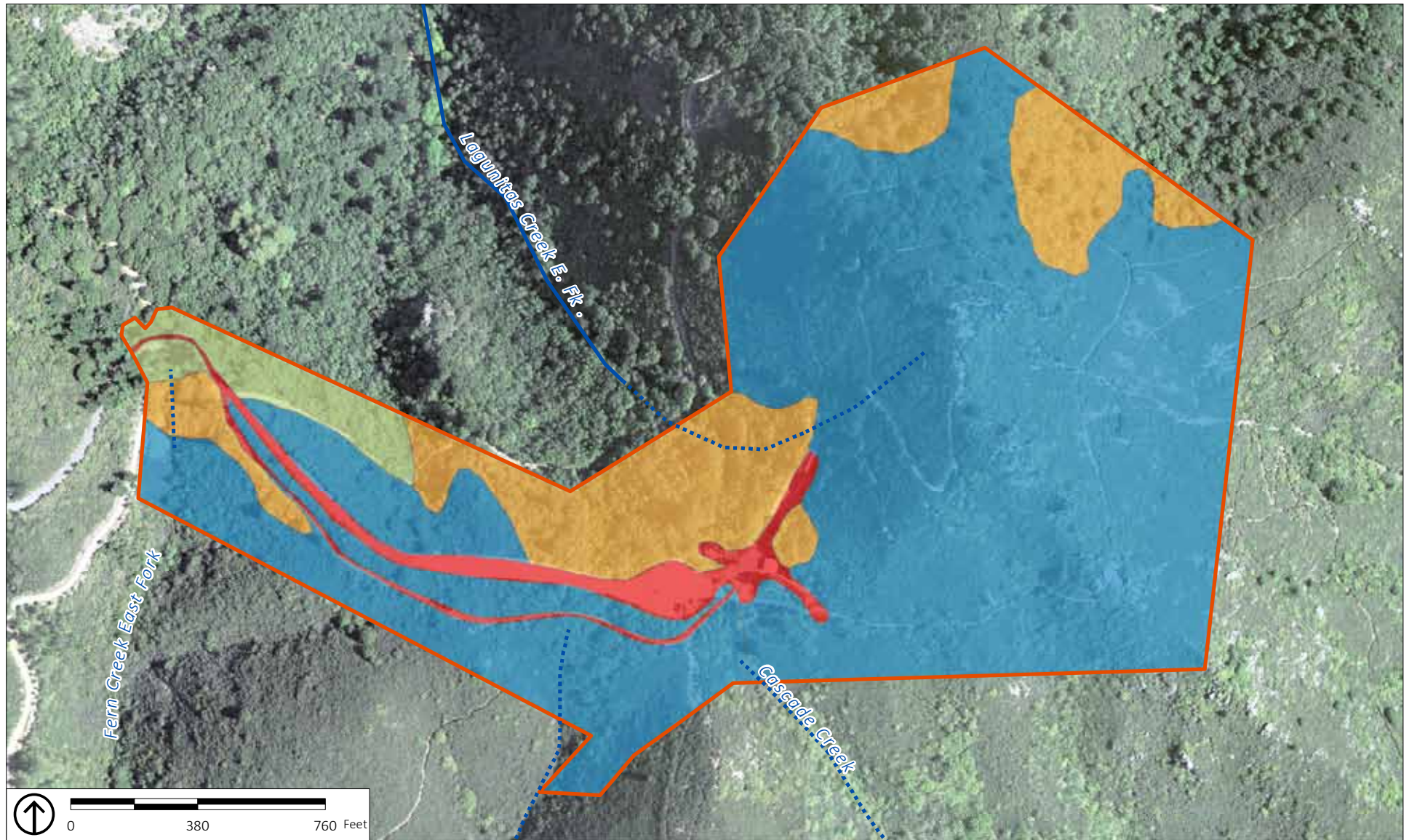
Oak/Bay Woodland occurs on moist, well-drained coarse soils usually on slopes and is dominated by tall, broadleaved trees between 10 and 30 meters in height. Most species are sclerophyllous evergreens that form a nearly closed forest canopy, and for this reason there is little to no understory present. Winter deciduous trees are present, but in fewer numbers. Rapid growth occurs in the spring and gradually decreases into the summer, eventually becoming nearly inactive during the winter.

On East Peak, Oak/Bay Woodland generally occurs on north-facing slopes, with the exception of one area at the extreme west end of the Survey Area. The large trees that define this community on East Peak exhibit no sign of any recent fire or



Chaparral on East Peak

FIGURE 3-3. Biological Resources



Source: California State Parks 2014, PlaceWorks, 2015



anthropogenic influence, other than the maintained trails and roads that wind through them. Dominant species include coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), California bay (*Umbellularia californica*), Pacific madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*) and bush chinquapin (*Chrysopsis chrysophylla* var. *minor*). Tree heights range from 15 to 40 meters. Approximately 9.36 acres of Oak/Bay Woodland occurs onsite, or 17.60 percent of the total survey area.

Douglas Fir/Redwood Forest

Douglas Fir/Redwood Forest is a moderately dense forest on shallow, well-drained soils, often on north-facing steep slopes subject to erosion. Trees may reach heights of 80 meters, but are often shorter due to summer and fall drought. The understory in this community is shrubbier than the adjacent Oak/Bay Woodland and can become subjected to infrequent devastating fires.

On East Peak, Douglas Fir/Redwood Forest occurs on the north-facing slope at the extreme west end of the survey area. There are no signs of recent fire, so all trees appear to be mature and in good health. Dominant species include coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) and Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*). The large trees of this community are situated on a north-facing slope of the East Peak Area and approach 50 meters in height. Dominant plant species include coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) and Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*). Tree heights range from 50 to 80 meters. Approximately 1.94 acres of Douglas Fir/Redwood Forest occurs onsite, or 3.65 percent of the total survey area.

Developed Areas

Developed areas can include paved roads, buildings, landscaped areas, parking lots, structures, and other human-constructed land uses that have replaced formerly occurring natural communities.

On East Peak, developed areas exist in the form of paved roads, parking lots, and buildings. Approximately 2.53 acres of East Peak was mapped as developed, representing 4.75 percent of the total survey area.

SENSITIVE VEGETATION COMMUNITIES

Blackhawk found one special-status plant located on-site: Marin manzanita (*Arctostaphylos virgata*). The species has no State or federal listing but is designated as a California Rare Plant Ranks (CRPR) 1B.2 species. Additionally, while other special-status species were not observed during Blackhawk's site survey, approximately 13 other special-status plant species have the potential to occur onsite.

WILDLIFE AND SENSITIVE HABITAT

Blackhawk recorded a total of 18 wildlife species at East Peak. One species, peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*), is listed as a Fully Protected Species (FP) as defined by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Other special-status species could utilize East Peak for various stages in their lifecycles, such as nesting, roosting, or foraging. Possible special status species that have the potential to occur include Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*), Townsend's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*), Hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*), Pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*), and Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*).

Implications for the Facilities Management Plan

Development changes on East Peak could have direct and indirect impacts on the biological community on the site through



Plant species along Verna Dunshee Trail

destruction of habitat, disturbance of plant communities, or interruption of behavior patterns, among others. In general, both direct and indirect impacts to plant and wildlife resources can be minimized and/or avoided by containing any future projects within the previously developed areas. Should the need arise to expand the footprint of the developed areas to accommodate new facilities in undeveloped areas, a full suite of focused biological surveys may be necessary to determine the presence/absence of any State and/or federally listed and/or otherwise sensitive species or vegetation communities.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

This section identifies cultural resources within the East Peak Area based on the Cultural Resources Assessment prepared by ESA as part of the East Peak Facilities Management Plan planning process and included in Appendix B. The historic context of the East Peak Area is provided in Chapter Two, and additional information and discussion related to cultural resources can be found in Appendix B.

PREHISTORIC ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

No prehistoric archaeological resources have been recorded within the East Peak area. Based on the geologic framework of the general vicinity, archaeological sites in this location would be on or near to the surface and exhibit cultural materials such as midden soils (culturally modified deposits) that include obsidian and chert tools or toolmaking debris, groundstone milling tools, heat-affected rocks, and/or shell and faunal remains. Extensive foot-traffic in the region indicates that prehistoric archaeological resources would likely have been identified during past cultural resources efforts and/or during recreational or hiking activities.

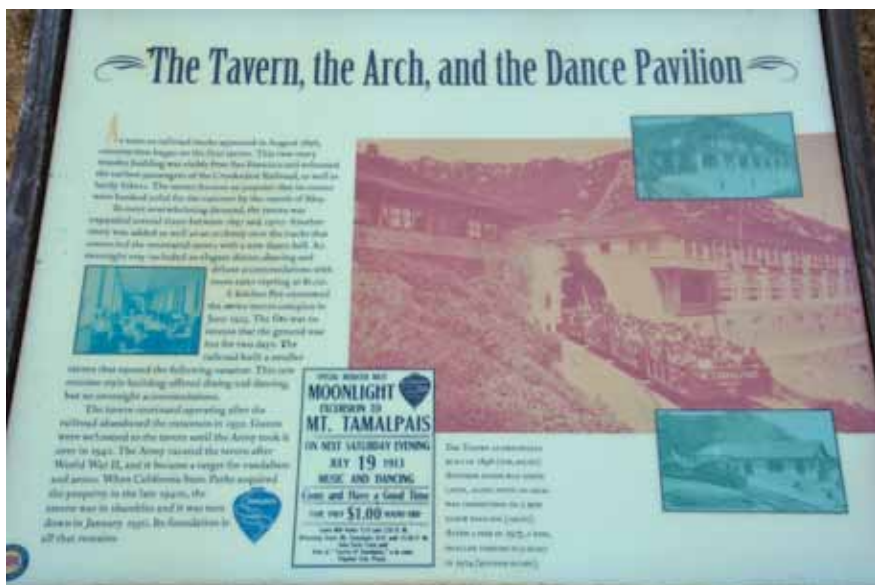
Despite the low sensitivity, the discovery of prehistoric archaeological resources cannot be entirely discounted; for example, previous development on East Peak may have covered or otherwise obscured prehistoric archaeological remains.

HISTORIC-ERA RESOURCES

There are several potentially significant historic-era cultural resources in the East Peak FMP area. Based on cultural resources investigations conducted within the vicinity of the East Peak Area and records at the Northwest Information Center (NWIC), there are three recorded cultural resources including the Tavern of Tamalpais with associated historic scatter, the Mount Tamalpais and Muir Woods Railway, and the Aviation Plaque (P-21-000710). These three resources and their implications to future development on East Peak are described below. Additionally, the NWIC information identifies the Mount Tamalpais Visitor Center as having no designation, and the Mount Tamalpais General Plan (1980) describes the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)-constructed fire lookout tower at East Peak as a cultural resource at East Peak.

Tavern of Tamalpais (Designated P-21-000573)

The site of the Tavern of Tamalpais is situated at the eastern end of Ridgcrest Boulevard, at the base of East Peak. The Tavern served the many tourists making the trip to East Peak on



Interpretive sign at Gravity Barn

the Mount Tamalpais and Muir Woods Railway during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Initially constructed in 1896, the Tavern was rebuilt twice after being damaged by fire (in 1913 and again in 1923), and was finally razed in 1950. The Tavern was built immediately adjacent to the rocky slopes of East Peak, with an elevated walkway crossing what was then the railroad grade to a dance pavilion erected where the parking area is now located. Building foundations are evident at the eastern edge of the site, as is a concrete patio area. Rock walls mark the edge of the parking lot and line the Verna Dunshee Trail. The slopes northwest of the tavern site are littered with domestic and building debris.

Mount Tamalpais and Muir Woods Railway (Designated P-21-000575 or CA-MRN-625H)

The Mount Tamalpais and Muir Woods Railway grade (designated P-21-000575 or CA-MRN-625H) was constructed in 1896 as an excursion line from Mill Valley to the East Peak of Mount Tamalpais and to Muir Woods. It was known as the “Crookedest Railroad in the World” because of the many turns along the 11 mile route. The railroad was officially abandoned in 1930. The railroad grade is maintained currently as a fire and access road, and the rails have been removed.

Aviation Plaque

Just outside of the East Peak Area is P-21-000710, a simple plaque affixed to a large rock just below the summit of East Peak. The original trail to the summit passed next to the plaque, but in subsequent years, the trail has been re-routed. The plaque was installed in 1915 by the people of Mill Valley to honor all who had died in the “science of aviation.”

Implications for the Facilities Management Plan

Based on a review of the historical context and the previous cultural resources documentation, the East Peak Area has a low to moderate sensitivity for prehistoric archaeological resources, an unknown sensitivity for traditional Native American cultural resources, and a very high potential for historical cultural resources. Recommended actions for protecting these resources include:

- **Expanded Survey.** A systematic survey and evaluation of cultural resources, including recording and evaluating debris related to the Tavern, would need to occur prior to improvements at East Peak.
- **Incorporation of Tavern Site into East Peak programming.** The Mount Tamalpais State Park General Plan includes a policy to fill the foundations to preserve them until further study can be made. However, the foundations could be incorporated in the East Peak Area as an interpretive element and marker of the Tavern’s location and history, or could be reused and incorporated into a new building. A qualified historical archeologist should update the State Parks site record for the Tavern and evaluate the resource for historic significance. If formal evaluation determines that foundations are significant and eligible for listing in the California Register, re-using these could be considered an adverse impact. An adverse impact may require additional mitigation, including a Memorandum of Agreement between State Parks and the State Historic Preservation Officer and a supporting Historic Properties Treatment Plan to reduce or resolve adverse impacts.
- **Maintain Use of Historic Railroad Grade and Historic Roadways.** Roadbeds for early railroad and stage lines may continue to be maintained and used as hiking trails.
- **Significant Native American Site.** Mount Tamalpais is not listed as an official sacred site by the Native American Heritage



Mount Tamalpais and Muir Woods Railway Logo

Commission. However, as one of the highest points in the greater San Francisco Bay Area, the East Peak of Mount Tamalpais may be considered a sacred place for Native Americans. The Draft FMP should be submitted to the Federated Indians Graton Rancheria (FIGR) for comment, ensuring that FIGR has a role in the continued planning process.

VIEWSHEDS AND VISUAL RESOURCES

As the highest point in Marin County and one of the tallest mountains in the San Francisco Bay Area, Mount Tamalpais's East Peak is an important visual resource for the region. To understand the extent of the area from which East Peak views are present, one need only to experience the views from East Peak, as any area visible from East Peak naturally affords views of East Peak as well. Views from East Peak are discussed below, as is the view of East Peak from other areas. Internal views of the East Peak Area, including issues related to site legibility, are discussed in Chapter 4 under Visitor Experience.

From the top of East Peak, it is possible to view San Francisco, Sonoma County, and the East Bay, as well as the Pacific Ocean and the dramatic coastline. Since much of the surrounding area is protected open space, including most of Mount Tamalpais and significant parts of the coastline, views include expansive, uninhabited areas. Expansive views are available from the parking lot as well as along Verna Dunshee Trail, which frames views in different directions as trail users progress along the trail. While the views from the East Peak Area are striking, obstructions to view areas exist in the form of utility infrastructure and dense vegetation.

The type of view afforded of East Peak from afar depends on viewer orientation, distance from East Peak, and elevation. From afar, most facilities at East Peak are not visible to the naked eye. However, views include the distinct ridgeline (which appears different depending on viewer orientation), the radar station at West Peak, and the Lookout Tower. As the viewer moves closer to East Peak, facilities may be more visible depending on viewer orientation and time of day. For instance, glare from the roof of the Gravity Barn has been reported as highly visible from lands to the north by Marin Municipal Water District Staff

Implications for the Facilities Management Plan

Changes to the silhouette of the ridgeline have a high potential to alter views of Mount Tamalpais, and reflective or brightly colored materials may also be legible from long distances. Recommended improvements for the East Peak Area will need to consider preservation of views of the mountain, as well as opportunities to enhance views from the mountain and the incorporation of compatible materials that will not negatively impact views to East Peak.



View of San Francisco Bay from Verna Dunshee Vista Point



4. FACILITIES AND USE PATTERNS

This chapter summarizes existing facilities and infrastructure, as well as the visitor experience of the East Peak Area.

FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

East Peak provides modest facilities and interpretive elements for site visitors. Figure 4-1 illustrates the site facilities in the main visitor area, including the Visitor Center, the historic Gravity Car Barn, restrooms, four picnic areas, and trails. All of the facilities are located below grade of the parking lot and are not directly visible upon arrival. Figure 4-2 illustrates additional features located in East Peak Area outside of the main visitor area, including the Verna Dunshee Trail and the Lookout Tower.

East Peak has been a recreational destination for over one hundred years, and during that time infrastructure and facilities have been constructed and reconstructed to satisfy changing needs, limited budgets, and shifting priorities. As a result, remnants of past uses are scattered throughout the site and the functioning facilities lack cohesion. For instance, stone and wood are commonly used throughout the site and have reference to historic building styles. However, concrete structures, such as the restroom and Visitor Center break from this pattern. Furthermore, the asphalt paving provides a smoother surface material but is inconsistent with the concrete paving used throughout the site, which shows significant signs of disrepair.

PARKING LOT

The main parking lot for East Peak is located at the terminus of East Ridgecrest Boulevard and is the arrival point for the East Peak Area. It is located at a high point, sitting above all the site features and restricting views of the Visitor Center, the Gravity Barn, and other site amenities. The lot provides 85 parking spaces including four accessible spaces. It is an oval area

approximately 173 feet by 128 feet that allows for circular traffic flow, with parking along the outside and inside of the turn-around for 43 vehicles.

There are an additional 42 parking spaces located along the final segment of East Ridgecrest Boulevard for a distance of approximately 525 feet, sloping up towards the more level upper parking lot. There are no pedestrian amenities along this segment of road, and the upper use area is not highly visible due to the grade change.

As noted in Chapter Two, the fee for parking at East Peak is \$8.00 per vehicle for day use, which is paid through a pay kiosk located in the middle of the upper lot.

During the vast majority of the time when the park is open, the parking lot is of sufficient size. State Parks staff familiar with use patterns at the site provided anecdotal information about parking lot use. During weekdays in recent years, the parking lot occupancy peaks at about 30 percent full. While occupancy during weekends and on holidays is much higher, reaching 70 to 85 percent, it is rarely entirely full. During overflow conditions, there is little parking available on the shoulders. During special events on the mountain, generally involving the Mountain Theatre, there is currently enough undeveloped unpaved space at West Peak to hold 100 to 200 vehicles, although that area may be lost in the future due to planning efforts for the West Peak area.

Since the main parking area is above the other facilities, it offers some of the best views from the East Peak Area. Benches are located at the southern edge of the lot and are popular resting places.

INTERNAL ROADS AND TRAILS

East Peak can be accessed by vehicle, bicycle or on foot, all of which are frequent modes for reaching the Peak. Major circulation patterns within the main East Peak area are shown in Figure 4-3 and described below

- East Ridgecrest Boulevard.** This vehicular roadway begins at the intersection of Pantoll Road and West Ridgecrest Boulevard and heads north up the mountain, terminating in the main East Peak parking lot. The road is about 20 feet wide with a posted speed of 25 mph, little to no shoulder in most places, and multiple blind curves. Pullouts are available on both sides of the road and are generally 10 feet wide (more in some areas) and allow for passing slower vehicles. Some pullouts near trailheads are large enough to park several cars. As noted previously, the final 525 feet of the roadway before reaching the East Peak terminus includes diagonal parking. Here the roadway expands to approximately 50 feet in width to accommodate the parking spaces.
- Connection from Parking Lot to Use Area.** There are three routes to the Visitor Center and use area from the parking lot, including a service road, a trail, and an ADA accessible ramp. The service road is centrally located but existing signage does not provide clear welcome for users. The trail is a narrow, steep route that is generally only visible only from the trail entrance. The ADA ramp is located along the northern edge of the parking lot in proximity to the ADA parking spaces, and connects to a second ramp which leads users to the Visitor Center. The ADA ramp is not easy to locate from other areas of the parking lot.



Angled Parking on East Ridgecrest Boulevard

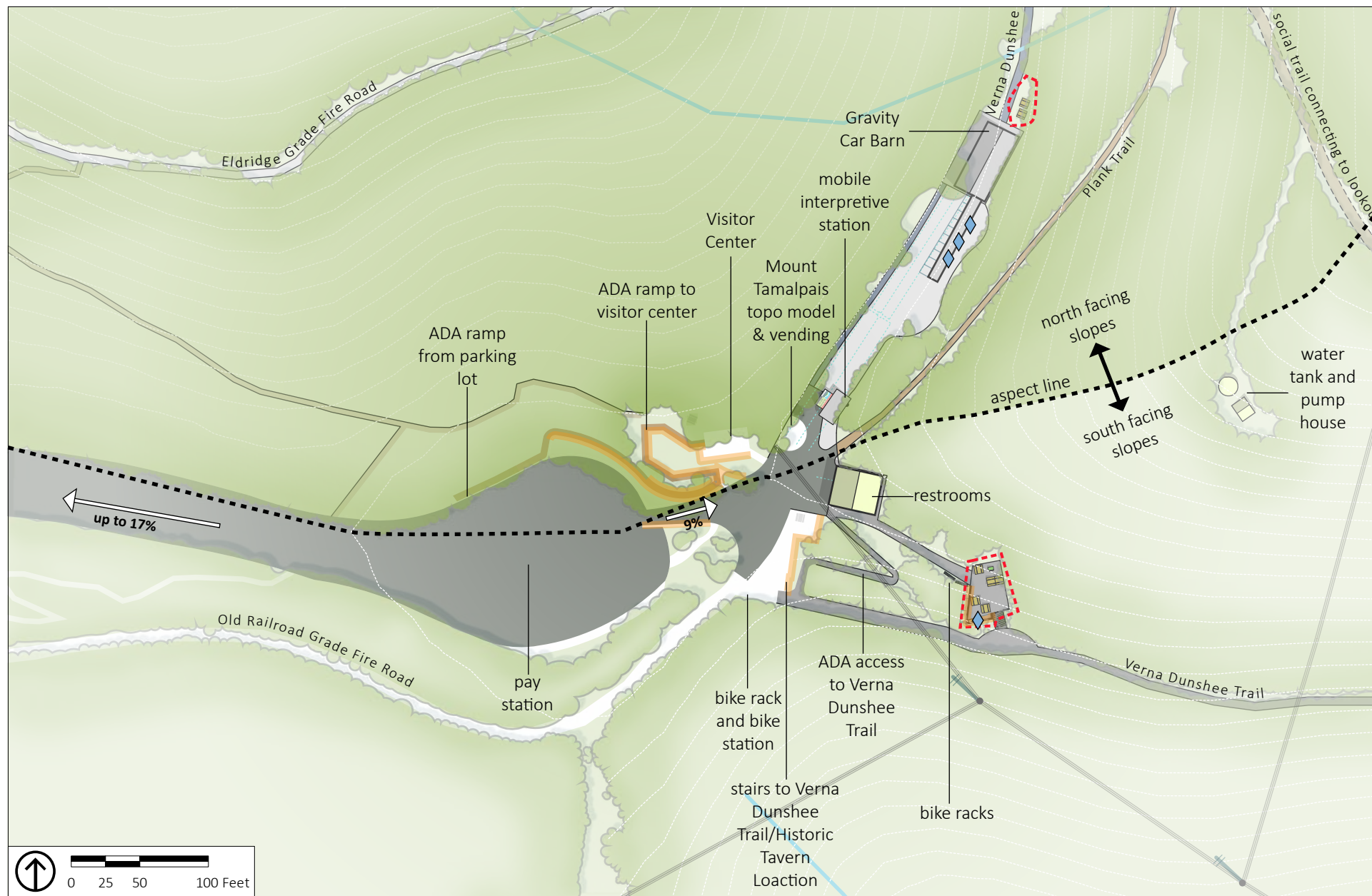


Approaching the Parking Lot from East Ridgecrest Boulevard



Old Railroad Grade

FIGURE 4-1. Major Features in East Peak Use Area (State Parks Owned)



Source: California State Parks 2014, PlaceWorks, 2015

- Stone Retaining Walls
- Utility Line
- Utility Pole
- Natural Drainage

- Underground Leach Lines
- Underground Septic Tank

- 10' Contours

- Plank Trail.** Serving as the maintained route between the Visitor Center area and the Marin County Fire Lookout Tower, Plank Trail connects visitors to one of the most popular destination in the East Peak Area. Visible in historical photos of the site, Plank Trail was likely constructed in its current location to be easily accessed by passengers disembarking from the Mount Tamalpais and Muir Woods Railway. Today, the trail begins behind the restroom as a wooden boardwalk with handrail. The boardwalk continues for approximately 650 feet to where the trail becomes dirt. The final ascent to the lookout is steeper and more rugged than the earlier segments of the trail. The area around the lookout is surrounded with large boulders which are excellent for sitting to enjoy the view but make navigation around the tower difficult. Although the trail is located predominately on Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD) property, it is maintained by State Parks as part of the East Peak experience.
- Verna Dunshee Trail.** The Verna Dunshee Trail is an ADA accessible trail that circumnavigates the peak providing views in all directions as it rounds the mountain. The trail passes between north and south facing slopes as it crosses the ridgeline, providing the visitor with an interesting example of the impact of sun exposure on ecological communities. There is one designated overlook point on the southern side, which is a popular photography point for views south to San Francisco and East to Mount Diablo. The trail is paved its entire length and intersects with Temelpa Trail, which connects to Mill Valley (although it is not ADA accessible), and North Knee Trail, which extends to an overlook to the San Francisco Bay.
- Old Railroad Grade Fire Road.** Located along the alignment of the historic Mount Tamalpais and Muir Woods Railway, this wide fire road connects the East Peak Area with Mill Valley. Its width and grade make it popular with mountain bike riders and dog walkers, who are permitted on the segments of the trail that are within MMWD property. With the exception of the trail's name, there is little else along the route to remind the visitor that the trail follows the historic route of the "Crookedest Railroad in the World."
- Connecting Trails/Roads.** An extensive network of trails is maintained on the MMWD lands, and many routes may be chosen that include a visit to East Peak. Some of the trails that access East Peak in the immediate vicinity include Eldridge Grade, Upper Fern Creek Trail, Temelpa Trail, and Northside Trail.
- Social Trails.** In addition to the formal trails maintained by State Parks or MMWD, there are numerous areas where visitors go off the designated trail. Many of these routes are located above Verna Dunshee Trail near the Lookout Tower where the formal trail becomes difficult to navigate. A largely eroded route veers off Plank Trail approximately 400 feet up the hill from the trailhead and offers an alternative route to access the Lookout Tower. For many visitors, this pathway seems to be permissible as signage restricting use is not visible. Additional social trails include routes to the popular rock climbing destinations located within East Peak area owned by MMWD. Site visitors will travel off trail to these outcroppings due to the lack of formal pathways. MMWD considers social trails at East Peak to be a significant hazard to the natural environment and would like to implement restoration processes and restrict use.



Entrance to Plank Trail from Plaza Area

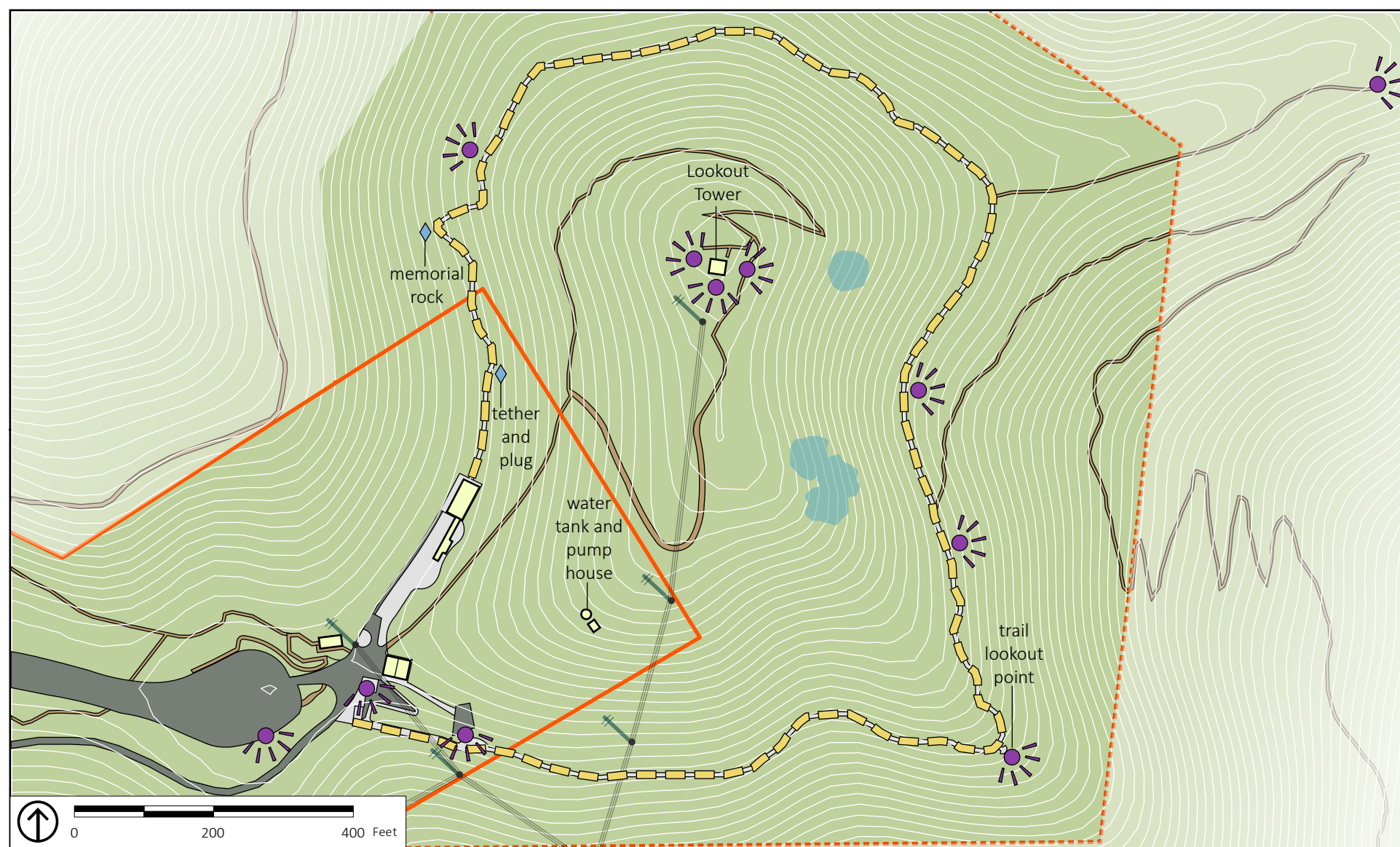


Southwest side of Verna Dunshee Trail



Social Trail from Lookout Tower

FIGURE 4-2. Major Features in East Peak Use Area (MMWD Owned and Joint Management)



Source: California State Parks 2014, PlaceWorks, 2015

- | | | | | |
|--|--------------|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| East Peak Use Area (State Park Owned and Maintained) | Utility Line | Verna Dunshee Trail | Interpretive Features | 10' Contours |
| East Peak Use Area (MMWD Owned and Joint Management) | Utility Pole | Vista Points | Rock Climbing Areas | |

PLAZA AREA

Upon leaving the main parking area, site visitors drop down into the main plaza area, which is composed of a restroom building, a below-grade visitor center, a picnic area, and the intersection of Verna Dunshee Trail, Old Railroad Grade Fire Road, and Plank Trail. The parking area sits approximately 10 feet above the plaza area and the Visitor Center is sunken approximately 5 feet below the plaza. These elevation changes make it difficult to orient oneself within the area. Additionally, the dominant feature in the plaza area is the restroom building, as it is centrally located within the visitor's line of sight when they exit the parking area. The plaza is also the historic location of the Tamalpais Tavern and former amenities associated with the Mount Tamalpais and Muir Woods Railway. Some historic foundations are used as a picnic area, although they are significantly degraded and are not accompanied by interpretive features.

The Plaza Area is the key junction for visitor experience at East Peak as it links to all the amenities available at the site. However, navigating from the plaza to the site elements is not a smooth transition and if the visitor is not aware of the layout of the East Peak Area, it is not clear how to navigate the site.

VISITOR CENTER

The Visitor Center is a one story building occupying approximately 350 square feet. The building was historically used as a restroom and is tucked down approximately five feet below the plaza area. Stairs connect the Visitor Center to the plaza area but the ADA accessible route begins in the parking lot. The ramp occupies a large area and is a visually dominant feature from the Plaza Area, yet the entrance is not readily visible from the parking lot.

Visitors can buy maps and souvenirs at the Center, as well as see a small exhibit about the historic use of East Peak and local flora and fauna. The Visitor Center is open from 11am to 4pm on weekends and is staffed by Friends of Mount Tam.

RESTROOMS

As noted, the dominant building in the plaza area is the restroom. The building is in good condition but has little architectural significance. The building is made of brick with an open gable, shingled roof. Entryways for men and women are located on either side of the building. A message board is attached to the exterior wall facing the plaza area.

SNACK SHACK/VENDING MACHINE

A snack shack operated at East Peak until 2014 when the vendor decided to terminate their contract. To supply a need, which was considered important for East Peak visitors, California State Parks replaced the snack shack with a vending machine offering healthy snack choices.



Plaza Area

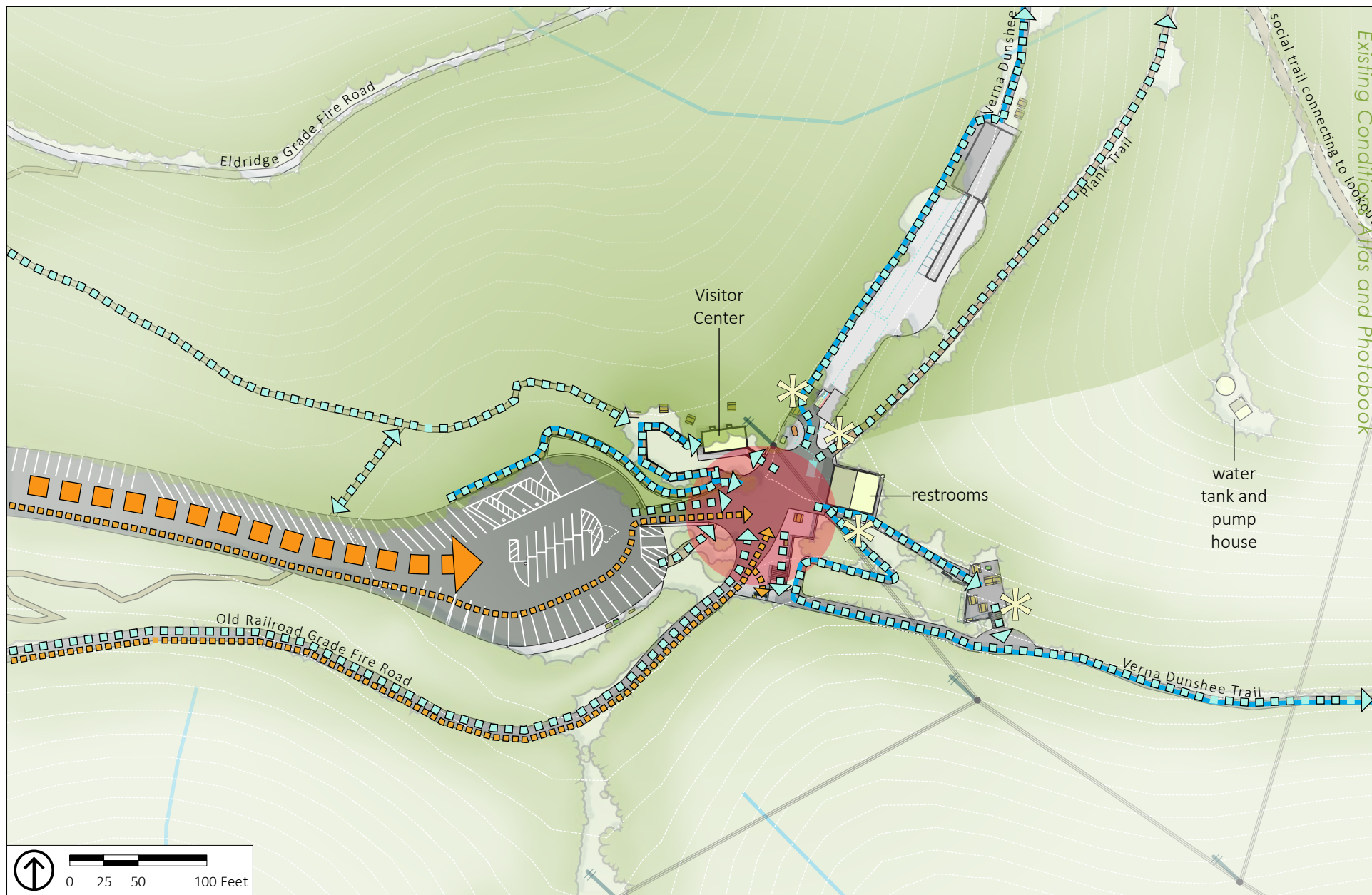


Visitor Center



Gravity Barn

FIGURE 4-3. Circulation



Source: California State Parks 2014, PlaceWorks, 2015

- | | | | |
|------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| Vehicular Travel | Pedestrian Travel | Plaza Area (Key Junction) | 10' Contours |
| Bicycle Travel | Accessible Pedestrian Travel | Directional Signage | |

GRAVITY CAR BARN

The Gravity Car Barn is located at the historic terminus of the Mount Tamalpais and Muir Woods Railway, which is set back from the plaza area. Although the train no longer runs from this site, it has become a popular destination for railroad enthusiasts from across the country. A piece of rail has been restored to/from the barn with interpretive elements including a replica of a historic gravity car and images of the rail line. The historic route of the railway continues from the barn as Old Railroad Grade Fire Road; however, this historic alignment is somewhat unclear to the visitor. The Gravity Car Barn is open from noon to 4pm on weekends and staffed by volunteer docents from Friends of Mount Tam that provide information of the historic use of the rail on East Peak.

PICNIC AND GATHERING

There are four picnic areas at East Peak. The most established one is located at the end of the short trail behind the restrooms above Verna Dunshee Trail. This ADA accessible platform is paved and has space for five tables, with excellent views to the south to San Francisco and west to the Pacific Ocean. However, the organization of the tables is somewhat haphazard and the paving is in need of renewal.

The picnic area behind the Visitor Center is situated below the trees and provides a fairly protected picnic experience, which is important on days with poor weather, which is common on East Peak. This picnic area is however, difficult to see and hard to find without knowing that it exists or being directed by a docent.

The picnic area located behind the Gravity Car Barn serves specifically to offer a place to sit after visiting this facility. It is not directly visible from the main area and is located directly adjacent to the Verna Dunshee Trail and near the culvert that drains the Plank Trail above.

There is one picnic table in the main congregation area adjacent to the restrooms. It is in the busiest area of the site and is a popular seating and gathering place where people try to orient to the site.

In addition, the paved area to the south of the restrooms with a stair connection to Verna Dunshee becomes an informal gathering space due to its prominent location; however, the facility is in disrepair with patchy concrete, exposed rock facades, and haphazardly placed bicycle facilities.

LOOKOUT TOWER

The top of East Peak is crowned with a Fire Lookout Tower owned by MMWD, and managed by the Marin County Fire Department. Although the structure itself is not open to the public, the view from the base provides a 360° view of the Bay Area. From the main visitor area located near the parking lot at the end of Ridgecrest Boulevard, the Lookout Tower is accessed from the Plank Trail.

The historic legacy of the tower dates back to the early 1900s. The San Francisco Examiner newspaper first utilized the location for a lookout station 1901 to spot ships approaching San Francisco. The structure became a fire lookout in 1921 and also a popular destination for hikers. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) reconstructed the fire



Picnic Area below Visitor Center



Stairs to Verna Dunshee Trail at Historic Tavern Location



Lookout Tower



Bike Rack and Repair Station



Verna Dunshee Trail Signage



Mount Tamalpais Model

lookout between 1935 and 1936 using many local materials, which were common in many CCC projects. The CCC also built a water system, including a rock pressure pump house below the peak, and ran electricity and phone lines to the tower. Named the Gardner Lookout, this is the structure that remains on East Peak today and still serves as an active Marin County Fire Department lookout.

While not specifically designed for public access, the area around the Lookout Tower remains a popular hiking destination and many visitors bring picnics up to eat on the large boulders below the tower. The area directly surrounding the base of the tower is especially treacherous to navigate with exposed infrastructure and unstable footings. In addition, overhead utility lines that connect to the Lookout Tower obstruct views from several areas of the East Peak Area.

BIKE REPAIR STATION

Site amenities include bike racks and a volunteer-supplied bike repair station. Although not possible to travel to the lookout at the top of East Peak on bike, the lower level is a very popular destination for both road and mountain bike riders. These volunteer amenities speak to the dedication of cyclists traveling to East Peak.

DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE

Existing directional signage in the East Peak Area is limited and mostly directed at managing vehicular traffic. In particular signage within the parking area is difficult to follow and makes it unclear how to enter the main site area.

Both ends of Verna Dunshee Trail have clear signage, although it is somewhat difficult to find the trailhead if traveling counterclockwise as the sign is located near the plaza area and trail continues beyond the Gravity Car Barn. The Verna Dunshee Trail signs include trail length, elevation change, and a summary of the trail conditions (width, grade, and surface).

INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE AND ELEMENTS

There are various interpretive elements scattered through East Peak. Verna Dunshee Trail is curated with numbered signposts that correlate to an interpretive story of the area, with an emphasis on botany. In addition, there are various environmental education signs placed along Verna Dunshee Trail depicting natural phenomena of the region. The Gravity Car Barn additionally contains interpretive panels depicting the history of the Mount Tamalpais and Muir Woods Railway and the story of a Gravity Car. Additionally, there is a large topographic model of Mount Tamalpais located near the Visitor Center depicting the watersheds of the mountain. There is a similar model at Muir Woods, which helps provide consistency between the sites on Mount Tamalpais.

MONUMENTS AND RELICS

Due to the long history of use at East Peak, various monuments have been placed in the area and some historical objects remain as relics of earlier times.

An Aviation Plaque is affixed to a large rock just below the summit of East Peak. The plaque was installed in 1915 by the people of Mill Valley to honor all who had died in the “science of aviation.”

Along the north side of the Verna Dunshee Trail, there is a large rock with a steel wedge embedded in it. This wedge was historically used to cleave rocks in a tether and plug style. This wedge became lodged and was abandoned in place. Across from the remnant tether and plug, a section of the trail with erosion issues was reinforced with a rock wall foundation and wooden post guardrail reusing railroad ties in a distinctive California State Parks style, with a rotated top rail.

The Sitting Bull shrine was originally erected in 1993 is located south of the East Peak parking area along Temelpa Trail. The shrine includes a plaque set into a large boulder outcropping. The shrine was installed by local hikers and originally included an image of image of Sitting Bull and was a common location for pilgrims to bring memorial objects. The plaque includes a speech from Sitting Bull:

“Behold, my friends, the spring has come; the earth has gladly received the embraces of the sun, and we shall soon see the results of their love! Every seed is awakened, and all animal life. It is through this mysterious power that we too have our being, and we therefore yield to our neighbors, even to our animal neighbors, the same right as ourselves to inhabit this vast land...”

UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Potable water for East Peak is stored in a tank located slightly below the peak and pumped to the site using the pump located above the restrooms. Wastewater is treated through a septic tank located near the restroom and leach field located to the east of the Gravity Car Barn, as shown in Figure 4-1. It is anticipated that both systems could support an increase in site use, however, further study would be needed to determine the level of increase that could be supported with existing infrastructure.

Electricity for the site facilities, including the Lookout Tower, is provided via overhead utility lines, as shown in Figure 4-1. Active utilities at the Lookout Tower include water, sewer, electricity, and telephone lines, as well as detection cameras. MMWD manages lease agreements for communications at East, Middle and West Peaks, including contracts with Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E), American Towers, and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for mobile, phone, radio, microwave, radar, and emergency radio.

State Parks extended utilities to accommodate the vending machine, and has also made some utility improvements in the plaza area to facilitate hook ups by a food truck.



Tether and Plug



Power Lines Obscuring View from Lookout Tower

USE PATTERNS AND VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Recent surveys and staff observations suggest that most visitors to East Peak stay for a relatively short time, often just enough time to take in the view and perhaps make a quick visit to the facilities or take a short hike along Verna Dunshee Trail or to the Lookout Tower. Possible reasons for the short-visits include lack of recreational amenities and difficulty navigating the site due to poor wayfinding and site cohesion.

ACTIVITIES

As discussed in Chapter 2, most East Peak Visitors come to hike, sightsee, mountain bike, or enjoy nature. In addition to these planned-for activities that are supported by the infrastructure and facilities described above, rock climbing and dispersal of cremation remains are also documented activities at East Peak. There are two popular locations for rock climbing along the southeastern-facing slope of East Peak. Local rangers note that rock climbing impacts the vegetation and rocks in the climbing areas; however, there are not regulatory signs prohibiting climbing in this area. The Northern Formation, to the north, includes five routes, ranging in difficulty from 5.3-5.7 on the Yosemite Decimal System (YDS) of rating scale. YDS classifies degree of difficulty for a climbing route, with climbs within the 5 range typically requiring climbing equipment. With the grade of 5, climbs can range from 5.1 to 5.15b, with 5.1 representing the easiest and 5.15b representing the hardest route ever climbed. The ranking of 5.3-5.7 represent a medium difficulty climb. The grouping to the south includes three rock outcroppings, Oberman's Rock, the Leaning Tower, and Southern Formation, with two routes, four routes, and two routes, respectively, ranging from 5.3-5.11 in difficulty on the YDS. In recent years, rock climbing on East Peak has gained in popularity; however there are no formal facilities or regulations for this type of use. To reach the rocks, climbers follow social trails outside of California State Parks trail network.

The East Peak of Mount Tamalpais is a popular location for the spreading of modern-era cremation remains. Since 1876 when the first crematorium in the United States was built, cremation has gained wider acceptance in both religious and more secular communities and the practice of memorialization through spreading ashes, rather than storage in decorative urns, has grown. Locations with symbolic and personal significance are often chosen, and venues maintain their own rules and regulations for the practice. In compliance with Health and Safety Code Section 7116, California State Parks allows creations to be scattered where appropriate with written permission from the property owner of controlling agency. Along the northern side of the Verna Dunshee Trail there is a plaque embedded in a rock memorializing George Grant and Grace Adelaide, whose ashes were spread on Mount Tamalpais. Their plaque reads, "Back to the Mountain in the Fullness of Life."



George Grant and Grace Adelaide Memorial Plaque

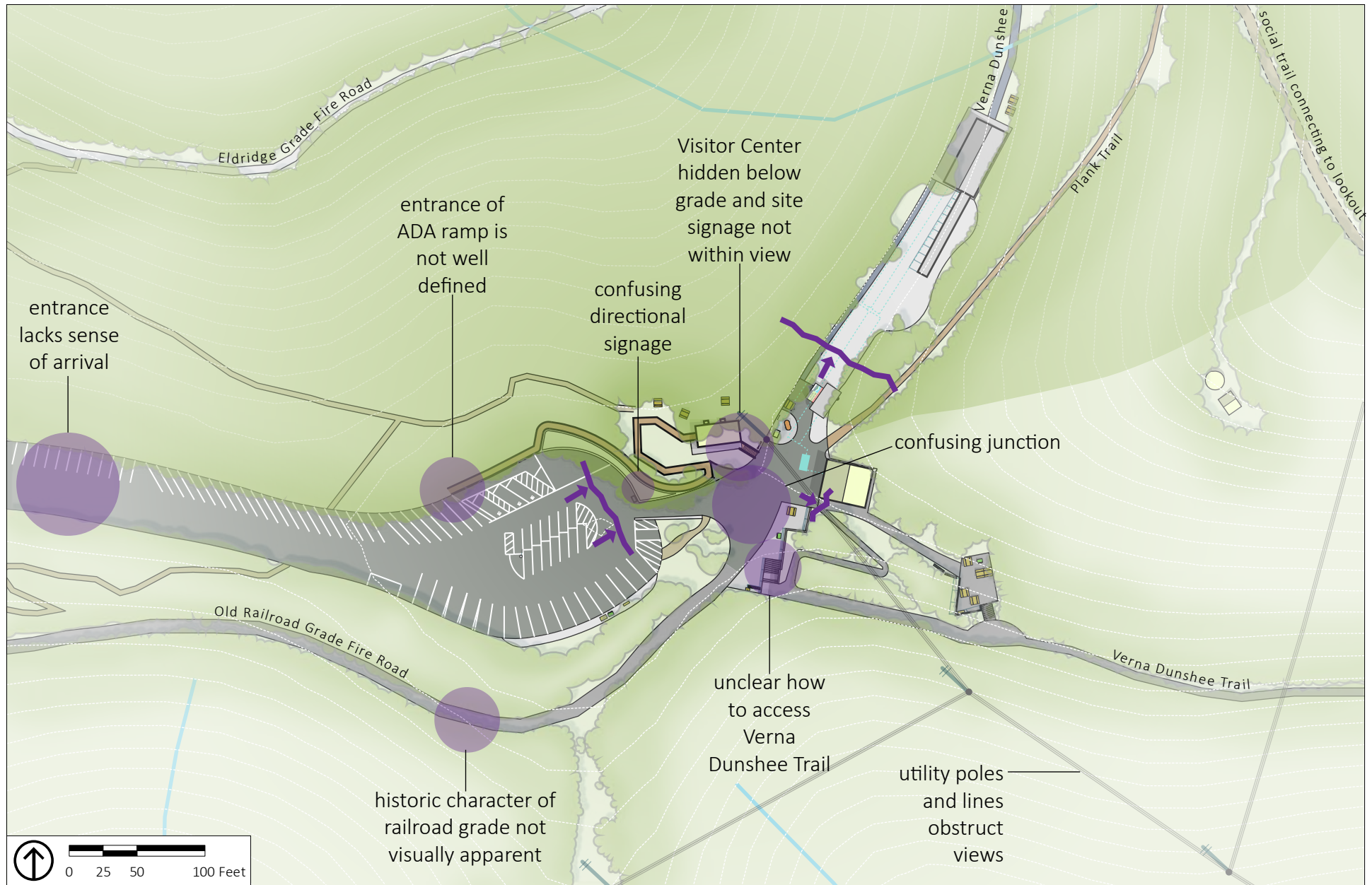
NAVIGATING THE EAST PEAK USE AREA

The visitor experience at East Peak is largely affected by the lack of visual cues that indicate hierarchy and location of key features, and highlight the importance or relevance of views and features. Unfortunately, the East Peak Area can be difficult to navigate due to visual barriers to key features and lack of clear signage and circulation. Furthermore, the wealth of cultural and natural resources are easy to overlook due to lack of visual framing, interpretation, signage, or visual access. This includes obstructed views, and lack of interpretation for the historic railroad grade and tavern remnants.

This section provides a synopsis of visual cues that contribute to orientation and navigation. Specific visual barriers to key site features and areas that are difficult to navigate due to the existing wayfinding are illustrated in Figure 4-4 and described below.

- **Arrival.** Upon arrival at East Peak via Ridgecrest Boulevard, the view is dominated by the parking lot and it is unclear where to go from the parking lot since the structures are below grade from the parking lot and the signage is unclear. While views of San Francisco and the Pacific Ocean to the southwest are immediately apparent from the south side of the parking lot, access to the viewing benches is not clearly defined and the facilities in this area are in need of improvement. Once the visitor reaches the east end of the parking lot and the plaza area, the restroom is prominently located at the center of the main junction, dominating the view.
- **Plaza Area.** Routes to two of the main attractions, the Lookout Tower and the Gravity Car Barn, connect to the plaza area, yet these connections are not easily visible due to lack of adequate signage. As a result, the plaza area is a confusing junction point where bikers, hikers, and other visitors can become confused. Additionally, the Visitor Center is below the grade of the parking lot, outside of the main view corridor, and does not readily invite people to enter.
- **Viewing Areas.** Much of East Peak is exposed, providing excellent views, but also offering little protection from inclement weather. Conditions on East Peak can become extremely windy, with cool winds coming predominately from the northwest from the Pacific Ocean, and rainy, during the winter months.

FIGURE 4-4. Visitor Orientation and Wayfinding



- Visitor Orientation Issue Areas
- 10' Contours
- Visual Barrier to Site Features

Source: California State Parks 2014, PlaceWorks, 2015



5. KEY OPPORTUNITIES

There are several overarching goals that the East Peak Facilities Management Plan (FMP) is intended to achieve, as discussed in Chapter One. These goals include: (1) to establish a world-class destination; (2) to plan a comprehensive site with a sense of place; and (3) to create seamless transitions through the site.

The existing resources, facilities, and current use patterns, as well as the broader planning context for East Peak described in the previous chapters, point to several key opportunities for reaching these goals as well as constraints that limit and define the world of possibilities for East Peak's future.

DISCUSSION OF KEY OPPORTUNITIES

Key opportunities for improving the visitor experience at East Peak are discussed below and illustrated on Figures 5.1 and 5.2. While the opportunities noted below are for specific sites, when combined these are opportunities to improve overall site organization and character, as well as visitor experience.

IMPROVE ENTRANCE AND PARKING LOT AREA

The parking lot is the dominant view upon entry into the East Peak Area, and occupies much of the ridgeline and level area leading up to the existing facilities. As discussed in Chapter Four, there is no clear demarcation or feature that indicates one has reached East Peak, and the dominating parking lot view can be disorienting. Furthermore, pedestrian access from the parking areas, especially the lower roadside parking, to the existing facilities has been identified as hazardous due to the steep grade between the two spaces.

The generous footprint of the parking area provides some opportunities for softening the appearance of the parking lot with planting/vegetation; for improving circulation, accessibility, and functionality; and potentially for reducing the parking lot footprint. There is opportunity to increase potential capacity through accommodation of transit/shuttle stops. The number of parking spaces necessary will depend on the proposed uses in the design alternatives. Improving functionality of this area may also involve updating the fee collection system.

REORGANIZE AND IMPROVE FACILITIES UNDER STATE PARKS OWNERSHIP

Existing facilities and developed areas at East Peak have a relatively small footprint, yet given the limited size of existing facilities there is ample opportunity for reorganization of the site to improve visual hierarchy, site navigability, circulation, and overall visitor experience.

The Gravity Car Barn is in good condition and has a strong aesthetic that connects it to the site's history and its function. Therefore, changes to this feature have not been recommended by any previous studies. In contrast, the Visitor Center does not have strong aesthetic character, and the restroom is in good condition, yet not well located as the visual focal point of the plaza area. Given these conditions, relocation and reconstruction of both the Visitor Center and restroom should be considered, either as a consolidated structure or separate facilities. For instance, a new specifically designed building could house multiple distinct functions: including a public agency's interpretive facility, a non-profit partner park store, and a private concessionaire café.

Other existing facilities that could be improved include picnic areas, which could be enhanced with consideration to location, visibility, and materials.

INCORPORATE TAVERN INTO EAST PEAK PROGRAMMING

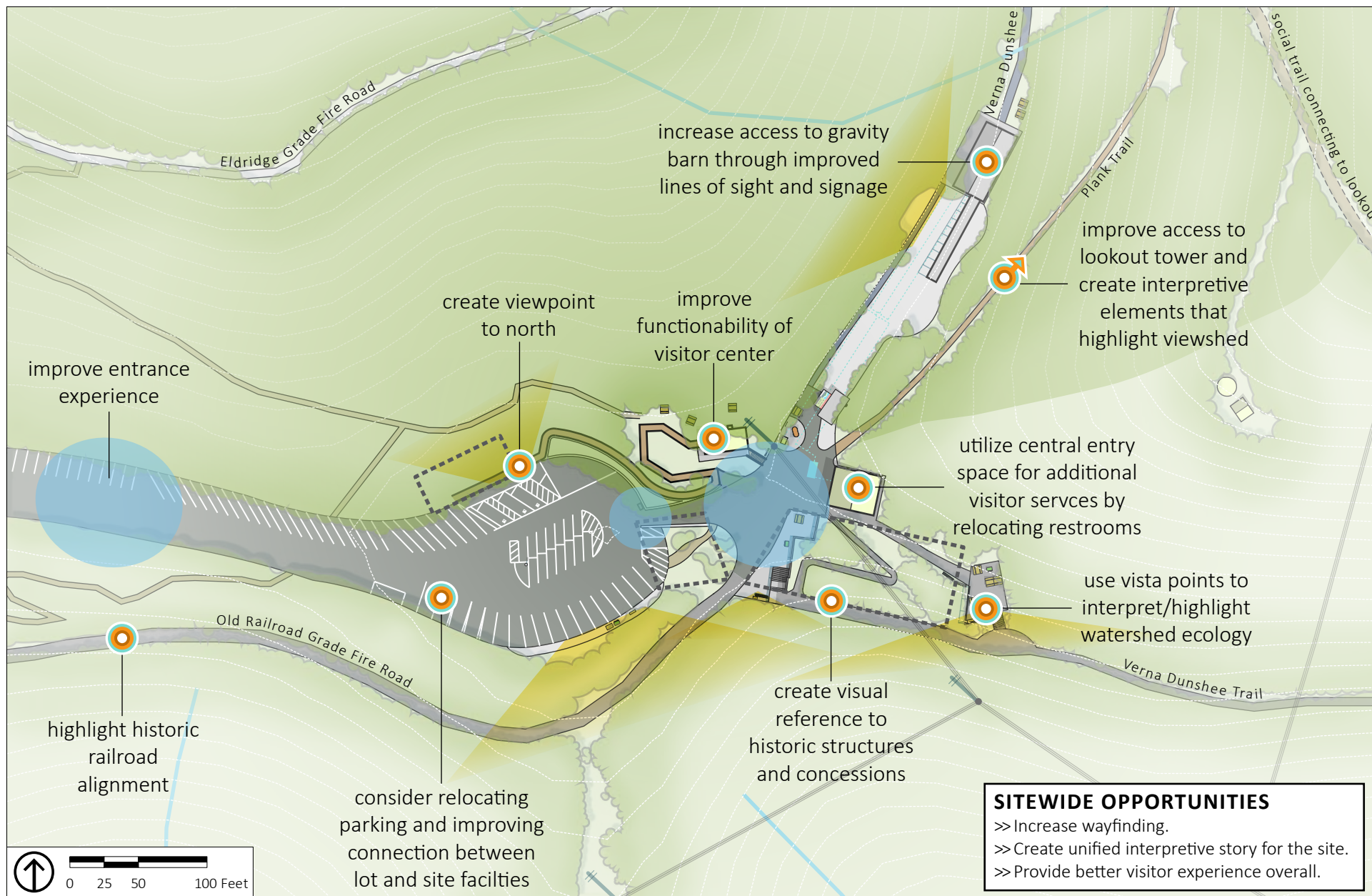
The Mount Tamalpais State Park General Plan includes a policy to fill the foundations of the Tavern to preserve them until further study can be made. However, the foundations could be incorporated in the East Peak Area as an interpretive element and marker of the Tavern's location and history, or could be reused and incorporated into a new, more accessible (and less hazardous) building. If formal evaluation determines that the foundations are significant and eligible for listing in the California Register, reusing them may require a Memorandum of Agreement between State Parks and the State Historic Preservation Officer and a supporting Historic Properties Treatment Plan to reduce or resolve potential adverse impacts, or similar mitigation.

INCORPORATE NEW AMENITIES AND FACILITIES

There is potential to include additional facilities and recreational opportunities at East Peak that would appeal to a broader audience and/or encourage longer visits and richer experiences. Types of facilities will be explored in the design process for the FMP, but are anticipated to include the inclusion of Engine #9, concessions (from food service to overnight lodging), as well as features that were identified during the 2010 charrette process, many of which have the potential to generate revenue and offset overall management and operations costs.

At least on weekends, there is clearly an opportunity to provide food and beverage service to visitors. The challenge is that due

FIGURE 5-1. Opportunities and Constraints in East Peak Use Area (State Parks Owned)



Source: California State Parks 2014, PlaceWorks, 2015

- Important Viewsheds
- Opportunities for Improving Visitor Orientation
- 10' Contours
- Historic Building Locations (approximate)
- Key Opportunities

to the limited hours and days of the week when market support is sufficient to operate profitably, it will be financially impossible for a private entity to pay the full cost of constructing new permanent facilities as part of a profitable concession agreement. As an incentive to potential operators, a high quality vendor space could be incorporated into the site design or combined with other structures as described above.

ENHANCE VISITOR ACCESS AND EXPERIENCE IN AREA UNDER MARIN MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT (MMWD) OWNERSHIP

The Lookout Tower is a key destination, yet is not visually or functionally appropriate for public access. Subtle improvements to this area could include relocating utility infrastructure and creation of a defined viewing deck. Such improvements could enhance the character of the Lookout Tower as well as visitor safety and experience. Trails accessing the area could be enhanced for improved definition and accessibility. This may include re-routing the upper section of the Plank Trail, consideration of a loop trail to improve traffic flow, and removal of social trails where possible.

The Verna Dunshee Trail is another key public access feature within MMWD lands. While the trail is currently well-used and provides a rich experience, opportunities to increase viewing and resting areas, to enhance the interpretive story, and to clarify regulations and management should be explored. These types of improvements would require close coordination with MMWD.

CREATE UNIFIED INTERPRETIVE STORY AND ELEMENTS

Current interpretive programming emphasizes botany and railroad history, yet the site lacks a cohesive interpretive program or theme that successfully highlights the unique natural and cultural resources, as well as the importance of the site to the greater park and region. The development of the FMP presents an opportunity to develop thematic programming that informs style and design of all site features to unify the site, and emphasize what is unique at East Peak as well its place in the interpretive programming for the mountain.

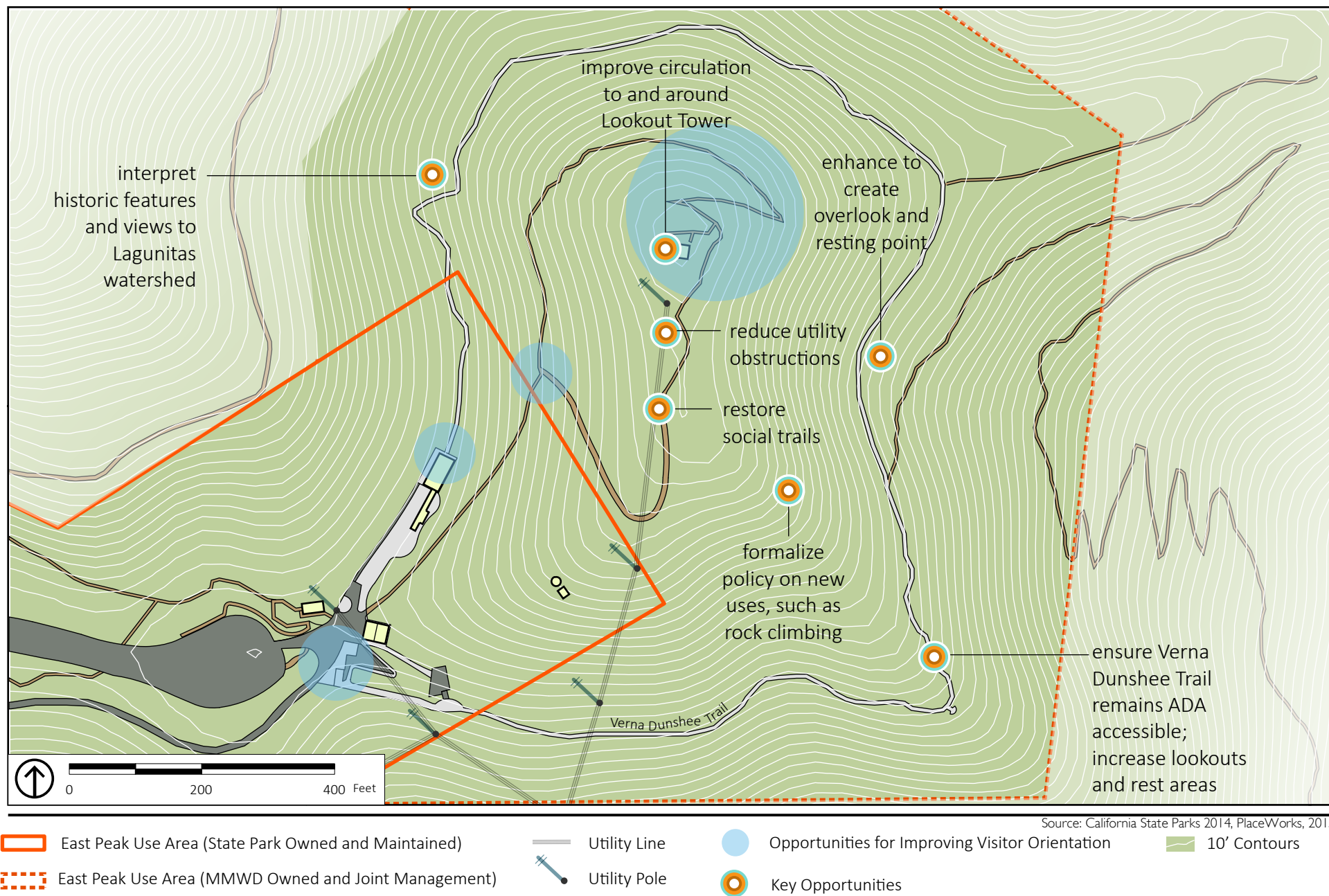
Numerous opportunities exist to highlight the site's cultural and biological resources. For instance, the railroad grade could be enhanced with signage and subtle design features to increase legibility of this feature; and views to the Lagunitas Watershed could be better framed and interpreted to provide a comprehensive peak experience.

Another opportunity related to interpretive programming is to consolidate East and West Peak interpretive content. West Peak is concurrently undergoing a planning process similar to this one for East Peak. West Peak has its own unique cultural and natural history to be interpreted and presented to visitors, and there may be opportunities for State Parks to house the interpretive story of West Peak in the same new facility focused in part on East Peak, perhaps tapping into the partner community supporting West Peak as well.

IMPROVE WAYFINDING AND SIGNAGE

While reorganization and re-design or other enhancement of existing structure and facilities would improve visitor orientation, a strong wayfinding program is needed to ensure site legibility for a variety of visitors. Opportunities include entrance signage and other wayfinding and directional signage, as well as the potential for branding the East Peak area. Regulatory signage is also

FIGURE 5-2. Opportunities and Constraints in East Peak Use Area (State Parks and MMWD Owned)



Source: California State Parks 2014, PlaceWorks, 2015

needed to clearly define rules and allowable uses in the multi-jurisdictional area, while not being overwhelming and adding to visual clutter.

OVERARCHING CONSIDERATIONS

The existing conditions and planning context give rise to several issues and opportunities that will need to be considered regardless of improvements considered. These overarching considerations are listed below.

- **Steep Topography and Limited Developed Footprint.** The level areas of the East Peak generally coincide with the developed footprint. Improvements within these areas have the potential to meet ADA accessibility requirements, and are unlikely to have impacts on biological resources. Any development outside of the footprint has the potential for impacts on sensitive biological resources, and facilities in steeper areas of the site will be more challenging in terms of universal access.
- **Sensitive Cultural Resources.** East Peak should be considered an important place as one of the highest points in the San Francisco Bay Area, and any improvements should be respectful of the resources. In addition, improvements will need to incorporate appropriate protection of remnant features (such as the Tavern foundations) as described in Chapter Three.
- **Sensitive Visual Resources.** Preservation and enhancement of views of the mountain will require sensitivity to the ridgeline and peak profile, as well as appropriate selection of materials. Enhancing views from the East Peak Area may inform location and type of improvements.
- **Parking and Infrastructure Capacity.** Infrastructure and facilities, including roadways and parking areas, are key factors in defining site capacity. However, limitations related to parking capacity may be offset by shuttle or transit service. Fortunately, it is anticipated that current water and electricity supply could easily be expanded to accommodate growth.
- **Economic Constraints.** Economic constraints include limited visitation/potential for revenue generation, as well as limited development budget.
- **Joint Ownership and Management.** Support by MMWD and other key stakeholders (Friends of Mt. Tam, Marin Fire, etc.), as well as the Tamalpais Lands Collaborative, is important for successful implementation of any proposed improvements.
- **Public Support and Preferences.** The East Peak Area is managed for public access, and therefore the support of the general public for proposed improvements is also an important consideration.

