



County updates trails master plan

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In a 5-0 vote, San Diego County Board of Supervisors approved the first update of the county's first Community Trails Master Plan and accepted approximately 11 miles of trail easements previously rejected when subdivision maps were recorded, including 2.19 miles of trail in Ramona.

"The county has confirmed its commitment to providing the recreational and transportation opportunities to the public," said Trish Boaz, the chief of the Resource Management Division of the county's Department of Parks and Recreation.

The County Trails Program was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in January 2005, when the supervisors also adopted the Community Trails Master Plan, which is the implementing document for the trails program. The Community Trails Master Plan sets development and management guidelines for non-motorized trails and pathways within the unincorporated portion of the county, and it also outlines the framework, objectives, and policies which apply to both community and the regional trails systems.

When the plan was originally adopted, it had approximately 1,186 miles of trails and covered 18 community trail and pathway plans and nine regional trail corridors. The trails program has received awards from the National Association of County Park and Recreation and from the California Park and Recreation Society, and various programs have received California Trails and Greenways Award recognition.

The first update of the plan saw the participation of 18 community planning or sponsor groups. Fifteen of those communities, including the Ramona Community Planning Group, approved update recommendations for their communities while the update also develops new trails and pathways plans for the Boulevard, Campo/Lake Morena, and Potrero areas. The Bonsall, Spring Valley, and Valle de Oro planning and sponsor groups said their existing plans are sufficient and not in need of update. Trails plans still do not exist in the Cuyamaca, Jacumba, Julian and Rainbow community planning areas.

While some of the trail easements have been dedicated as a condition of approval of discretionary development permits, the trails program acquires easements from willing property owners, according to the county.

"We do not take land by eminent domain for trails," said Supervisor Bill Horn. "Nobody here has to give up their land."

Prior to the adoption of the trails program, the Board of Supervisors approved indemnification of property owners willing to provide a trail easement on their property but did not want to incur the liability if a user was injured.

During work on updating the trails plan, county staff reviewed recorded maps dating back to 1977 for unaccepted trail easements. They discovered 23 recorded maps with rejected trail easements currently being used for public trail purposes.

The supervisors' approval of the update directs county staff to provide two separate maps. Existing trails will remain on the Web site, while plans for future trails will be available to the public but not in a location sufficiently prominent to confuse users.

"When we do that we will continue to make friends as we expand our trail system," said Supervisor Pam Slater-Price.

That satisfied the concern of Ted Griswold, who represented the Sycuan Band of Mission Indians.

"Our opposition is not necessarily to the plan itself but to the publication of the plan," he said. "The general public who's using these maps will be looking for a trail to use."

Some of those potential future trails are on Sycuan land.

"They're unauthorized trails, but people use them," Griswold said.

Lynne Malinowski of the Twin Oaks Valley Equestrian Association noted the need for defined trails.

"Without sanctioned trails, people take other alternatives," she said.

Twin Oaks Valley resident Mary Borevitz also supported the update of the plans.

"We could really benefit by having these trails developed and maintained," she said.

Borevitz noted that school bus service does not exist in her area, so the trails can be used by children traveling to and from school.

"Personal health and community health is why we need these trails," she said.

"Trails are some of the least expensive ways to get in shape," said Nancy Reed of the San Dieguito Community Planning Group.

The linkage features were praised by Fallbrook resident Jackie Heyneman.

"The trails map also provides connectivity to other counties," she said. "You don't just get cut off at the end of the San Diego County line."

John Degenfelder of the Ramona Trails Association also noted the inter-community benefits.

"We like to make connections," he said.

Degenfelder noted that county staff and the Ramona Trails Association are working on a future connection using the Old Survey 97 trail between San Pasqual and Ramona.

"Trails are a marvelous thing," said Supervisor Greg Cox. "They're extremely important just for the quality of life."