

Agenda Item V.

Title: Consideration to approve the Draft Outdoor Recreation Plan trail proposals or to continue to consider additional modifications.

Background:

During the Public meetings held between March and May, requests were received from the Coalition for the Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP) and members of the public to add six additional trail corridors to the Plan totaling approximately 60 miles. At the same time a request has been made by the Concerned Mayacamas Neighbors, a group of homeowners to the north of Sonoma, to delete the Mayacamas Ridge Trail South (Trail AH) from the Draft Outdoor Recreation Plan.

Discussion:

1. Additional Trails

Prior Action by the Citizens Advisory Committee.

- ~ In May, 1997, following a presentation of over 700 miles of trail corridors suggested at the public workshops, the Citizens Advisory Committee directed staff to evaluate and rank the trail corridors. The Committee's direction was that the Draft Plan include those trail priorities that were "doable" within the ten year life of the Plan. Staff from Regional Parks Department, the Permit and Resource Management Department, Sonoma County Water Agency and the Open Space District developed criteria for a ranking system for the trail corridors. Using this ranking system, an analysis was conducted of each trail corridor. This analysis was presented to the CAC on September 10, 1997. The analysis ranked three levels of Priority for trails. A Priority 1 trail was a trail corridor that scored over 85%.
- ~ On October 8, 1997, following a review of the priority trails by the CAC and public comment, the CAC requested that some trails that scored lower than 85% be added to the Draft ORP. The CAC requested staff to prepare a plan based on Priority 1 trails, some Priority 2 trails and occasionally Priority 3 trail corridors where a trail would complete a significant gap between other trails.
- ~ On May 8, 1998 the Committee agreed on the format of the Outdoor Recreation Plan map. At its June 17, 1998 Meeting, the Committee agreed on a draft trail map. This became the basis of the 1999 Draft Plan. The Committee spent many of its meetings in the first two years of the planning process dealing with trail issues.

Board Policy Workshop.

In 1999, prior to the Board Policy workshop, CORP requested that twelve additional trail corridors be added to the 1999 Draft. At the 1999 Policy Workshop, the Board directed staff to add the South Sonoma Mountain Trail, which had been previously deleted because of opposition from property owners in the Sonoma mountain area. The Board also directed staff to “Offer a balance of recreational opportunities that recognizes that the inclusion of trails is important to the Draft Plan”.

Staff reviewed the proposed trail plan in the 1999 Draft and recommended that two trails be extended to close two gaps in the trail plan. These are:

a. Extend the North Mayacamas Trail at Robert Louis Stevenson State Park to Cloverdale. This extension would complete a loop trail around the County. Although this corridor had scored only 68 in the original evaluation, it is felt that the significance of this corridor became more of a priority to complete the loop.

b. Extend the northern section of the Laguna de Santa Rosa Bikeway. This trail was extended added to connect to the Santa Rosa Creek Trail. This would enable the network of trails in the Laguna de Santa Rosa (Rodota Trail, Laguna de Santa Rosa Bikeway and the Santa Rosa Creek Trail) to connect.

Of the 403 miles trails shown on the 2000 Draft of the ORP are composed as follows.

Priority Ranking	Mileage	Percent of Total	Notes
Priority 1	228 miles	56.5%	Includes Class 1 Bikeways from the 1997 Bikeways Plan.
Priority 2	81 miles	20.2%	
Priority 3	55 miles	13.6%	
Trails not evaluated but added to plan since 1997. (See Notes)	39 miles	9.7%	Includes Stevenson Trail (E) from the existing General Plan omitted in error from evaluation in 1997. The Mayacamas Ridge Trail South (AH). The balance consisted of two shorter trails to close gaps (AV) and (AY) and some additional Class 1 bikeways.
Total	403 miles	100%	

2. Deletion of the Mayacamas Ridge Trail South (Trail AH).

This trail was not evaluated in 1997. On March 13, 1998 representatives of the Sonoma Ecology Center and the City of Sonoma Environmental Advisory Commission attended the CAC Meeting and requested that a trail link from Sonoma to Sugarloaf Ridge State Park be included in the Draft ORP. They stated that five of ten affected property owners were interested in the trail. The trail was added to the Draft Plan presented to the CAC on June 18, 1998 and the Draft that was submitted as the 1999 Draft ORP.

During the Board Policy Workshop meetings in 1999, homeowners in the South Mayacamas Mountains requested that the proposed trail be deleted from the plan. Their letters and comments are included in the Appendix to the June 2000 Draft ORP (pp12-96 through 12-102). The Board's workshop was on the general direction of the Outdoor Recreation Plan and they did not provide any specific direction on this trail proposal.

At the Public meeting in Sonoma on March 8, 2001, residents again requested the trail be deleted (Items 1, 5, 8 and 14 of Public Comments and Responses). They have also submitted a letter outlining their concerns about fire and safety, (Attachment 4 of Public Comments and Responses). The Mayacamas Ridge Trail South is supported by the Sonoma Valley Trails Committee, the Sonoma Ecology Center and two residents of the area (See: Attachments 1 and 18, a post card from Maggie Salenger Haywood (Comment #147) and a letter from Phil Morton (Appendix 12-95 of the Draft ORP).

All trail alignments on the Draft ORP are general in nature. Actual trail easements can only be obtained from willing landowners (See: Comment Section #1). The issues of fire and safety impacts of trails have been studied and responded to in the plan. (See: Public Comment section #3 and #6).

Recommendation:

Unlike parks, there are no recommended standards of numbers of miles of trails per 1000 population. The Draft ORP currently includes proposals for 403 miles of regional trail corridors. This represents a threefold increase in Multi Use Trails and almost a sixty percent increase in Class 1 bikeways from the existing General Plan.

The Committee may want to refer to the following table of trail mileage and population statistics in other Bay Area counties as a "bench mark" when it considers the issue of modifications to the proposed trails in the Draft ORP.

COMPARISON WITH OTHER COUNTY TRAIL PLANS

Planning Document	Proposed Trail Mileage	Population 2000	Regional Trail miles per 1000 Population
Marin County Trails Plan (1994)	722 miles*	247,289	2.92 miles
Sonoma County Draft ORP (2000)	403 miles	458,614	.88 miles
East Bay Regional Parks' Master Plan (1995)- Includes Alameda and Contra Costa Counties.	1410 miles*	2,392,557	.59 miles
San Mateo County's Trail Plan (2001)	307 miles	707,161	.43 miles
Santa Clara County's Trail Plan (1997)	535 miles	1,682,585	.32 miles

*This number includes all trails within parks as well as regional trails. No break out of figures was available.

The existing Draft Outdoor Recreation Plan contains a significant increase in proposed trails over the existing General Plan. The 2000 Draft Plan proposes a trail system that would place Sonoma County above most other Bay Area counties using a ratio of trail miles per 1000 population.

The actual implementation of any trail corridor will require cooperation of willing property owners. The overall intent of designating a trail from the City of Sonoma to Sugarloaf Ridge State Park would provide planning guidance should opportunities offer themselves in the future to either acquire or accept dedications of easements. Staff does not recommend deletion of this trail from the Draft ORP.

Options:

1. The Committee could continue to accept comments from the public and make modifications to the trails component of the Draft Outdoor Recreation Plan.
2. The Committee could approve the trails as shown on the Draft Outdoor Recreation Plan and close further discussion.