

8 VISITOR USE POLICIES AND MANAGEMENT

This chapter focuses on visitor use policies. It begins with visitor use goals and desired outcomes, followed by guiding principles for the road and trail system. These sections are then followed by system-wide policies, a description of each visitor use management zone, and zone-specific policies. The majority of policies described in this chapter are from other plans previously approved by the Board of Directors. New policies developed for this RTMP are identified as such.

8.1 Introduction to Visitor Use Goals and Desired Experiences

Visitor use goals summarized from the Notice of Preparation (2011) for the RTMP include the following:

- To provide an appropriate range of desired experiences for visitors
- To address visitor conflict issues
- To minimize or avoid impacts to sensitive resources

Information on visitors' desired experiences is found in scoping comments as well as in results from the visitor survey conducted by *Alta Planning + Design (2011)*. From scoping comments collected during fall 2010 and spring 2011, visitors' desired experiences are summarized by the most frequently mentioned responses, in the following categories:

- See or experience something new (new trails, loop trails)
- Be able to travel long distances
- Travel to scenic vistas/view good scenery
- Be free from user conflicts
- Learn about/appreciate nature
- Tests of skills

Results from the visitor survey conducted by *Alta Planning + Design* offer some similar responses, as well as responses not mentioned during scoping. The most frequently mentioned reasons for the purpose of the visit were:

- Exercise (93 percent)
- Recreation (49 percent)
- Experience nature (41 percent)
- Social (29 percent)

The majority of survey respondents were using open space for exercise, for recreation, and to experience nature, but nearly one-third (29%) were using open space to achieve social outcomes.

The visitor survey was also used to query visitors about any concerns and comments they had; the most frequent responses are listed below:

- Requests for more single track trails (5 comments)
- Concerns regarding bicyclists riding too fast and poor interactions with bicyclists (6 comments)
- Dog waste was the most common concern (16 comments)
- Off-leash dogs (8 comments)
- Conversely, permitting off-leash dogs was appreciated (9 comments)
- Horse waste (8 comments)

Collectively, horse and dog waste represented the largest category of concerns (24 comments). Visitors also appreciated the fact that dogs were allowed off leash (9 comments).

In summary, visitor desires are to enjoy a variety of experiences, minimize impacts to sensitive resources, and minimize visitor conflicts. Visitors are using the Open Space Preserves for recreation, exercise, to experience nature, and to have social interactions. In terms of desired recreation experiences, visitors want variety, long trails, opportunities for good views, and viewing or learning about nature.

8.2 Guiding Principles for the Road and Trail System

Guiding principles for making determinations regarding which roads and trails will be included in the MCOSD's road and trail system are identified below. Any road or trail included in the Road and Trail Assessment will be considered for inclusion in the road and trail system. Those roads and trails that were not included in the Road and Trail Assessment will not be considered for inclusion in the road and trail system (see Chapter 9).

Some of these guiding principles were developed by MCOSD staff, and others were noted during review of road and trail management plans developed by other park and open space organizations in the San Francisco Bay area. The following guiding principles provide a framework for the visitor use management policies described in this chapter.

- The road and trail system will provide a fair, desirable, and appropriate range of recreation opportunities - and associated infrastructure - for visitors to enjoy the preserves.
- The impacts to the natural environment from the road and trail system will be acceptable under the California Environmental Quality Act, as well as other applicable local, state, and federal environmental laws and regulations.
- Conflicts among visitors will be minimized.
- Foreseeable construction, maintenance, and enforcement responsibilities related to the road and trail system will be financially feasible.
- Management actions will be the result of an objective and transparent decision analysis process.
- Visitors will show respect for private property and adjacent property owners and land uses.

8.3 System-Wide Policies

RTMP policies that will be applied on a system-wide basis reflect multiple themes:

1. Recognizing the importance of trails to the public, meeting future demand for trails, providing trails for a variety of users, and acknowledging historic trail uses when a trail is added to the MCOSD system.
2. Ensuring a sustainable road and trail system.
3. Protecting sensitive resources.
4. Minimizing user conflicts.

Several new policies (below) emphasize the importance of natural resource protection. Other new policies emphasize the limited role that the preserves have for providing mountain biking opportunities. In addition to these system-wide themes, there are a smaller number of policies that focus on road and trail connectivity, parking, trail-related infrastructure and signage, accommodation of multiple user types, private property trespass, and MCOSD's authority to restrict recreation use under certain circumstances.

8.3.1 Existing Policies

System-wide visitor use policies that pertain to all MCOSD lands were excerpted from the Marin Countywide Plan and MCOSD's Policy Review Initiative, previously adopted by the Marin County Board of Supervisors and the MCOSD Board of Directors respectively.

POLICIES FROM THE COUNTYWIDE GENERAL PLAN

BIO-4.14: Reduce Road Impacts in Stream Conservation Areas (SCA). Locate new roads and road fill slopes outside SCAs, except at stream crossings, and consolidate new road crossings wherever possible to minimize disturbance in the SCA. Require spoil from road construction to be deposited outside the SCA, and take special care to stabilize soil surfaces.

BIO-5.f: Control Public Access. Design public use areas to be clearly marked, to minimize possible conflicts between public and private uses, to provide continuous walkways from the nearest roads to the shoreline and along the shoreline, to be set back from any proposed structure, and to be buffered from wetlands. Restrict access to environmentally sensitive marshland and adjacent habitat, especially during spawning and nesting seasons.

BIO-4.k: Locate Trails Appropriately. Situate trails at adequate distances from streams to protect riparian and aquatic habitat and wildlife corridors. Trails may occasionally diverge close to the top of the bank to provide visual access and opportunities for interpretive displays on the environmental sensitivity of creek habitats.

Goal TRL-1: Trail Network Preservation and Expansion. Preserve existing trail routes designated for public use on the Marin Countywide Trails Plan maps, and expand the public trail network for all user groups, where appropriate. Facilitate connections that can be used for safe routes to school and work.

TRL-1.1: Protect the Existing Countywide Trail System. Maintain the existing countywide trail system and protect the public's right to access it.

TRL-1.2: Expand the Countywide Trail System. Acquire additional trails to complete the proposed countywide trail system, providing access to or between public lands and enhancing public trail use opportunities for all user groups, including multi-use trails, as appropriate.

TRL-1.4: Coordinate Trail Planning. Promote collaboration among public land management agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and private landowners to implement the Marin Countywide Trails Plan and regional trail systems.

TRL-1.b: Designate Trails Consistent with Agency Missions. Determine public use of trails consistent with each agency's mission and policies.

TRL-1.e: Explore Funding for Trail Acquisition. Consider developing or supporting legislation to assist trail acquisition. Consider public and private funding sources, including private endowments and bequests.

TRL 1.g: Evaluate Proposed Development for Trail Impacts. Review development proposals for consistency with the Marin Countywide Trails Plan or local community plans.

TRL 2.1: Preserve the Environment. In locating trails, protect sensitive habitat and natural resources by avoiding those areas.

TRL 2.3: Ensure User Safety. Plan and maintain trails to protect the safety of trail users.

TRL 2.5: Provide Access for Persons with Disabilities. Design and develop trails and trail programs to enhance accessibility by persons with disabilities.

TRL 2.6: Provide Multiple Access Points. Design trails with multiple access points to maximize accessibility and minimize concentrating access.

TRL 2.7: Ensure Sustainable Maintenance. Continue to ensure that trails are responsibly maintained.

TRL 2.8: Provide Trail Information. Strive to provide information to trail users that facilitates visitor orientation, nature interpretation, code compliance, and trail etiquette. Develop method for signing trails to assist users and emergency personnel.

TRL-2.a: Locate Trails to Protect Habitat. Align or relocate trails to avoid impacting sensitive habitats such as wetlands and areas where endangered species are present. Avoid aligning trails along the boundaries of sensitive habitats.

TRL-2.b: Design, Build, and Manage Trails in a Sustainable Manner. Incorporate design measures that protect vegetation, protect habitats, and minimize erosion.

TRL-2.c: Eliminate Trail Redundancy. Identify, abandon, and restore redundant or otherwise unnecessary trails or trail segments.

TRL-2.d: Protect Private Property. Design and locate trails to avoid trespassing and adverse impacts on adjacent private lands and sensitive land uses.

TRL-2.e: Design Safe Trails. Design trails so that their surfaces, grades, cross gradients, sight distances, width, curve radii, vegetation clearance, and other specifications are consistent with anticipated uses.

Policy T2a: MCOSD will use best management practices in the design, construction, and maintenance of trails.

TRL-2.f: Acknowledge Historic Trail Users. When acquiring a property for public use, consider trail use that occurred prior to the public acquisition.

TRL-2.g: Promote Harmony Among Trail Users. Provide educational information, and consider special programs and events to promote trail etiquette and cooperation among trail user groups. Encourage interagency collaboration on countywide standards for trail etiquette to promote harmony among trail user groups.

TRL-2.h: Identify Access Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. Review existing access opportunities for persons with disabilities. Identify and pursue new opportunities.

TRL-2.k: Ensure Trail Maintenance. Encourage public agencies to develop trail maintenance plans and enter into cooperative trail maintenance agreements. Encourage volunteer trail stewardship programs.

TRL-2.l: Ensure Trail Maintenance Funding. Strive to identify and secure consistent sources of funding for trail maintenance. Develop a program for funding that explores trail adoption, trail maintenance annuities, jurisdictional cooperation, and other sustainable methodology.

TRL-2.m: Maintain Trails in a Sustainable Manner. Consider and implement as appropriate.

TRL-2.n: Promote Interagency Cooperation. Encourage information sharing and cooperation among public agencies concerning sustainable trail maintenance.

TRL-2.p: Improve Code Compliance. Encourage trail managers to enforce codes, secure consistent funding for code enforcement, monitor the type and frequency of violations, and offer educational materials and programs to reduce code violations. Expand or create volunteer opportunities to monitor trail use.

POLICIES FROM THE MCOSD POLICY REVIEW INITIATIVE

Policy T1a: MCOSD will allow trail-based uses on open space, because the ability of the public to access and enjoy open space enhances the quality of life in Marin.

Policy T1b: MCOSD will permit use of fire protection roads by open space visitors on foot, on a bicycle, and with a saddle animal, but may limit any or all uses when appropriate.

Policy T1c: MCOSD will permit use of trails by visitors on foot and with a saddle animal, but may limit any or all uses when appropriate.

Policy T1d: MCOSD will permit bicycling on trails designated for their use, including (a) new trails that MCOSD builds and designates for shared use and (b) existing trails on new lands, when compatible with natural resource protection and the safety of trail users. (Existing policy to be revised as set forth in Section 8.3.2 below)

Policy T1e: MCOSD will prohibit trail use conduct and other trail use modes that compromise the protection of natural resources or the safety of open space visitors.

Policy T1f: MCOSD will discourage the use of trails that are not part of its system of maintained trails when use of such trails is inconsistent with natural resource protection. (Existing policy to be revised as set forth in Section 8.3.2 below)

Policy T1g: MCOSD will prohibit the use of motorized vehicles on open space, with authorized exceptions.

8.3.2 Revisions to Existing Policies

Policy T1d: MCOSD will permit bicycling on trails designated for their use.

Policy T1f: MCOSD will discourage the use of trails that are not part of its system of maintained trails.

8.3.3 New System-Wide Policies

RTMP.SW.1: Application of RTMP Policies. The policies and requirements of this RTMP will apply within all open space district lands, within any new preserves that may be established, and on existing and future trail easements. In the event of a conflict with these policies, the easement will prevail. (Source: New Policy)

RTMP.SW.2: System Roads and Trails. System roads and trails are those located within existing or future preserves, and maintained by the MCOSD. MCOSD may improve, maintain, convert, or decommission roads and trails according to the policies and requirements of this RTMP. Roads and trails outside of open space preserves, or roads and trails not maintained by the MCOSD, are not within the system of roads and trails. (Source: New Policy)

RTMP.SW.3: Prohibition on Off-road or Off-trail Equestrian Use. Horses and pack animals must stay on system roads and trails, except when watering or resting the animal. Off-trail riding is prohibited. Riding on non-system roads and trails is prohibited. (Source: New Policy)

RTMP.SW.4: Prohibition on Off-road or Off-trail Bicycle Use. Possession and riding of a bicycle is permitted only on system roads and trails designated for bicycle use. Off-trail riding is prohibited. Riding on non-system roads and trails is prohibited. (Source: New policy)

RTMP.SW.5: Prohibition on Off-road or Off-trail Pedestrians with Dogs or Other Domestic Animals. Pedestrians with dogs and other domestic animals must stay on system roads and trails. Off-trail use by pedestrians with dogs and other domestic animals is prohibited. Use of non-system roads and trails by pedestrians with dogs and other domestic animals is prohibited. (Source: New policy)

RTMP.SW.6: Policy on Pedestrian Activities. Pedestrians are strongly encouraged to stay on system roads and trails. (Source: New Policy)

RTMP.SW.7: Mountain Bicycle Road and Trail Connectivity. MCOSD will strive to increase road and trail connectivity for mountain bicycle use, and provide opportunities for short to medium distance loops, and long distance rides. MCOSD may consider one-way trails, uphill-only, and single-use trails to achieve these ends. (Source: New policy)

RTMP.SW.8: Prohibition on Extreme Mountain Bicycling Activities. Open space preserves provide opportunities for mountain bicycle riding at low to moderate speeds. Extreme mountain bicycling activities, including racing and training for racing, and high-speed downhill riding, are not permitted in open space preserves. (Source: New policy)

RTMP.SW.9: Expectation of Active Cooperation of Mountain Bicycle Community. Increased mountain bicycle opportunities must be coupled with the active cooperation of the mountain bicycle community with MCOSD and other trail user groups to promote lawful mountain bicycle use, reduce mountain bicycle violations, prevent displacement of equestrians and pedestrians, and endangerment of other users. (Source: New Policy)

RTMP.SW.10: Prohibition of Uses. MCOSD may prohibit certain trail uses or apply increased trail use restrictions within certain areas to enhance safety, minimize conflicts between trail users, and protect natural resources. Examples of areas where this policy may apply include those proximate to stables and those traditionally heavily traveled by equestrians. (Source: New Policy)

RTMP.SW.11: Displacement of Existing Users. MCOSD will strive to prevent displacement of equestrians and pedestrians when accommodating new mountain bicycle trail connections and riding opportunities. (Source: New Policy)

RTMP.SW.12: Unauthorized Trail Construction and Maintenance. MCOSD has zero tolerance for unauthorized trail construction and unauthorized reopening of closed or decommissioned roads and trails. MCOSD will prosecute such violations to the fullest extent of the law. MCOSD will explore and apply new deterrence methods, including increased penalties and user group-targeted land closures, to stop such damaging and unlawful activities. (Source: New Policy)

RTMP.SW.13: Redundant Roads and Trails. Redundant roads or trails are defined as those that roughly parallel an existing route serving essentially the same purposes, uses, and user groups. MCOSD will decommission one of a pair of redundant roads or trails, and will select for decommissioning the road or trail segment that has the worst overall condition, presents the highest maintenance costs, or contributes to the most environmental effects. (Source: New Policy)

RTMP.SW.14: Decommissioning of Existing Roads and Trails. MCOSD may decommission any road or trail at any time to protect environmental resources, enhance user safety, or align maintenance costs with available funds, unless a road or trail is required under license, lease, or easement for non-recreational purposes (e.g., utility access), or for maintenance access by MCOSD staff, or emergency access by other personnel. (Source: New Policy)

RTMP.SW.15: Conversion of Existing Roads. It will be MCOSD policy to convert existing roads to trails, unless a road in its existing configuration is required under license, lease, or easement for non-recreational purposes (e.g., utility access), or for maintenance access by MCOSD staff, or emergency access by other personnel. Subject to the foregoing, MCOSD may convert any road to a trail at any time to protect environmental resources, enhance user safety, or align maintenance costs with available funds. (Source: New Policy)

RTMP.SW.16: Protect High-Value Vegetation Types by Limiting Public Access. As a general policy, visitors will be directed away from areas of high-value vegetation types to prevent disturbance and adverse impact. This will be done through the appropriate placement of trails, by erecting fencing, or installing educational signs that provide information about the resource values being protected. (Source: Draft Vegetation Management Plan)

RTMP.SW.17: Incorporate Zone and Vegetation Sensitivity Designations into Project Planning for New Facilities. As a general policy, visitor facilities and infrastructure, such as roads and trails, will be consolidated in the Urban Interface and Natural Landscape zones. The overall objective for vegetation management will be to preserve large, unfragmented areas of natural vegetation and connectivity. The connection between and among travel corridors will largely be addressed outside of the Legacy and Sustainable Natural Systems zones (Source: Draft Vegetation Management Plan).

RTMP.SW.18: Remove or Realign Roads and Trails Away from High-Value Biological Resources. Many of the existing roads and trails in the preserves are old ranch roads, which were never designed for, or located in places intended for, recreational or educational experiences or scenic viewing. Neither are many of the existing roads optimally located for use as fire roads.

The existing conditions assessment of all roads and trails on open space district lands will assist MCOSD in determining which redundant, unnecessary, underused, or high-maintenance roads and trails can be decommissioned, converted, or re-routed. Special consideration will be given to roads and trails located within high-value vegetation types, including habitat for special-status species.

As a general policy, roads will be removed from those areas that fall within the Legacy Zone unless a legally binding agreement exists. As a general policy, redundant and/or poorly sited trails will be decommissioned and/or rerouted away from the Legacy Zone. Areas where roads or trails are removed will be restored to natural conditions. The removal or realignment of roads will be done in consultation with Marin County Fire. (Source: Draft Vegetation Management Plan)

RTMP.SW.19: Minimize Intrusions into Larger Contiguous Habitat Areas. In considering the need for roads, trails, and fuelbreaks, MCOSD will strive to minimize their effects on large, connected areas of habitat. (Source: Draft Vegetation Management Plan)

RTMP.SW.20: Identify Ignition Prevention Zones. MCOSD staff will identify, with input from County Fire, those areas adjacent to development, used by the general public, or occupied by public utilities, where the potential for wildfire ignition exists. These areas - which will generally include trailheads, communication sites, and power line corridors - will be managed as ignition prevention zones. MCOSD will construct and manage ignition prevention zones in areas that are at risk from public activities. Areas that do not receive public use, but that contain property with high social value (e.g., mountaintop repeaters or cell sites) may also require ignition prevention zones. This work will be accomplished by the utility, with oversight by MCOSD staff. Power lines are often a source of fire ignition, especially during windy days. Public power providers whose electrical transmission lines cross MCOSD lands will be consulted regularly to coordinate risk mitigation efforts within utility rights-of-way. (Source: Draft Vegetation Management Plan)

These ignition prevention zones will be mapped and described in a separate GIS data layer; they will be inspected annually, prior to the onset of the fire season, and information will be used to inform potential temporary closures or public use restrictions when “red flag” conditions exist, or to help identify areas where fuel reduction is warranted to prevent ignition.

RTMP.SW.21: Control or Restrict Access to Ignition Prevention Zones when “Red Flag” Conditions Exist. Appropriate actions will be taken to minimize the risk of wildfire ignition when “red flag” conditions exist. These actions may include prohibiting vehicle access, closing trails and picnic areas, or closing entire areas to all human activities until “red flag” conditions subside. The public will be informed of the reasons why such actions are being taken, and areas will be patrolled to ensure compliance. (Source: Draft Vegetation Management Plan)

RTMP.SW.22: Strategically Locate Ingress/Egress Zones (Along Fire Roads). Existing ridgetop roads currently exist to provide emergency access to the interior of preserves for firefighting and rescue operations, and for maintenance purposes. Some of these existing fire roads (in most cases, old ranch roads) cause environmental damage, impact native species, fragment habitat and disrupt the wildlife corridor, and encourage the spread of nonnative invasive species (Weaver and Hagans 1994). In some cases, fire roads could be decommissioned or converted to trails. The optimal and more strategic locations for fire roads would be in perimeter locations, in the urban interface zone where they could connect to primary access routes, and where they could efficiently support evacuations and safe passage for firefighting equipment while avoiding impacts on natural systems in the interiors of the preserves. This will be completed in consultation with Marin County Fire. (Source: Draft Vegetation Management Plan)

RTMP.SW.23: Restore Nonessential Fuelbreaks and Fire Roads to Natural Conditions. Nonessential fuelbreaks and fire roads in the interiors of the preserves will be restored to natural conditions to increase habitat connectivity and reduce the potential for invasive species, following the guidance for restoring high-value habitat, described above. This will be completed in consultation with Marin County Fire. (Source: Draft Vegetation Management Plan)

8.3.4 Policies for the Road and Trail System by Topic

ROAD AND TRAIL CONNECTIVITY

TRL-1.d: Establish Regional Trail Connections. Strive to complete regional trail systems in Marin County, including the Bay Area Ridge Trail, the San Francisco Bay Trail, and the California State Coastal Trail. The proposed alignment of the Coastal Trail will be considered through process to update Marin County Local Coastal Plan. (Source: Marin Countywide Plan)

RTMP.T.1: Loop and Long Distance Trail Connections. Maintain road and trail connections where they provide for loop and long distance oriented visitor experiences, and do not conflict with resource protection or habitat restoration goals. (Source: New Policy)

SIGNAGE AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Policy VA2: MCOSD may provide visitor amenities such as: a) informational displays and signs; b) portable restrooms in areas where group use is seasonally frequent; c) facilities for watering and tying equines; and d) bicycle racks. (Source: MCOSD Policy Review Initiative)

RTMP.T.2: Visitor Amenities. MCOSD may allow visitor amenities such as: a) facilities to encourage the pickup and disposal of pet waste; b) other equine facilities; and c) potable water, when neighborhoods, communities, or others partner with MCOSD and contribute funding and/or labor necessary for their purchase, installation, and maintenance. (Source: New Policy)

Policy T2c: MCOSD will strive to provide information, including signs, to trail users that facilitate visitor orientation, nature interpretation, code compliance, and proper trail etiquette. (Source: MCOSD Policy Review Initiative)

PARKING

Policy P1: MCOSD will rely primarily on public rights-of-way to provide the parking capacity necessary to serve open space visitors arriving by motorized vehicle. (Source: MCOSD Policy Review Initiative)

Policy P2: MCOSD will strive to provide multiple points of entry to open space, to maximize available parking capacity and to avoid concentrating access. (Source: MCOSD Policy Review Initiative)

Policy P3: MCOSD will encourage open space visitors to walk, bicycle and carpool to open space. (Source: MCOSD Policy Review Initiative)

Policy P4: MCOSD should partner with police and fire departments to enforce lawful parking at entrances to open space. (Source: MCOSD Policy Review Initiative)

Policy P5: MCOSD may seek increased parking capacity on a case-by-case basis when necessary for public safety. (Source: MCOSD Policy Review Initiative)

RESPECT FOR PRIVATE PROPERTY

TRL-2.2: Respect the Rights of Private Landowners. Design and manage trails to avoid trespass and trail construction impacts on adjacent private land. (Source: Marin Countywide Plan)

RESTRICTIONS ON USE

Policy T1e: MCOSD will prohibit trail use conduct and other trail use modes that compromise the protection of natural resources or the safety of open space visitors. (Source: MCOSD Policy Review Initiative)

Policy T1f: MCOSD will discourage the use of trails that are not part of its system of maintained trails. (Source: MCOSD Policy Review Initiative)

Policy T1g: MCOSD will prohibit the use of motorized vehicles on open space, with authorized exceptions. (Source: MCOSD Policy Review Initiative)

COORDINATION WITH ADJACENT LANDOWNERS

Policy T2b: MCOSD will strive to coordinate trail design and management with the owners and managers of adjoining lands. (Source: MCOSD Policy Review Initiative)

8.4 Visitor Experience Management Zones

Visitor use management zones are commonly used in recreation planning for two purposes:

1. To acknowledge and manage a range of resource conditions and visitor experiences over an entire area for which a plan is being prepared, and
2. To designate uniform resource protection and visitor experience conditions within portions of the planning area defined by common characteristics (e.g.-vegetation type, use level).

MCOSD has developed four visitor use management zones in this RTMP. Visitor Experience Management Zones (VEMZ) are associated with one or more of the vegetation management zones described in MCOSD's Draft Vegetation Management Plan. The establishment of VEMZs considers existing as well as desired future natural resource conditions, and adjacency to other public lands. The VEMZs provide for variation in visitor experiences, and represent distinctly different environmental conditions, ease of access, and visitor use levels. Finally, the VEMZs will help guide management actions identified in the RTMP. Each Zone is described below, and the management policies applicable to each VEMZ are set forth in Table 8-1 at the end of this chapter.

8.4.1 Zone 1: Immersed in Nature

Desired Future Condition: Preservation and enhancement of target plant, wildlife, and aquatic species, and their habitats. Visitors perceive and experience an undisturbed, natural environment.

Definition: The Immersed in Nature Zone would have the highest level of resource protection, the lowest level of visitor use, and a net decrease in facilities. Existing intact high quality resource areas

with minimal disturbance (see Figure 8-1). Areas in the Immersed in Nature Zone will typically be well buffered (i.e., surrounded) by other Legacy Zone areas, areas targeted for restoration, or other minimally degraded lands. The Immersed in Nature Zone is planned to accommodate low to moderate current and anticipated visitor use. Opportunities to experience solitude and an undisturbed natural environment would be highest in this zone.

Locations: Located in limited areas with highest value resources (valued plant community, or areas of rare or listed species, or cultural resources) within Legacy Zones. Lands in the Immersed in Nature Zone also include Marin County-delineated Stream Conservation Areas. The Immersed in Nature Zone may be comprised of several relatively small areas, and each area may require a minimum size to effectively protect a particular species or their habitat (e.g., northern spotted owl nesting area).

Special Management Policies:

1. No new roads will be constructed;
2. No new trails will be constructed, unless necessary to enhance environmental protection;
3. If new trails are constructed, a net decrease in trail mileage and disturbance, within the Immersed in Nature Zone, would be required;
4. Existing roads will be converted to trails unless required under license, lease, or easement, or for maintenance access by MCOSD staff;
5. The emphasis in the Immersed in Nature Zone will be on road and trail decommissioning, and removal of evidence of former roads or trails, or obvious access points to these areas to increase resource protection;
6. Non-system roads and trails will be actively decommissioned;
7. System road and trail rehabilitation projects could occur in this zone, or in adjacent buffer areas if needed;
8. Within Stream Conservation Areas, roads and trails will be rerouted outside of stream setback zones, and incursions into the setback zone will be permitted only perpendicular to the thread of the stream;
9. Subject to the conditions of RTMP policy RTMP.SW.4, bicycle and equestrian travel will be limited to system roads and “wide” trails; and,
10. No off-road or off-trail travel by any user will be permitted in this zone.

Where this Zone Would be Applied: Examples include portions of Cascade Canyon Preserve and Gary Giacomini Preserve (see Figure 8-2).

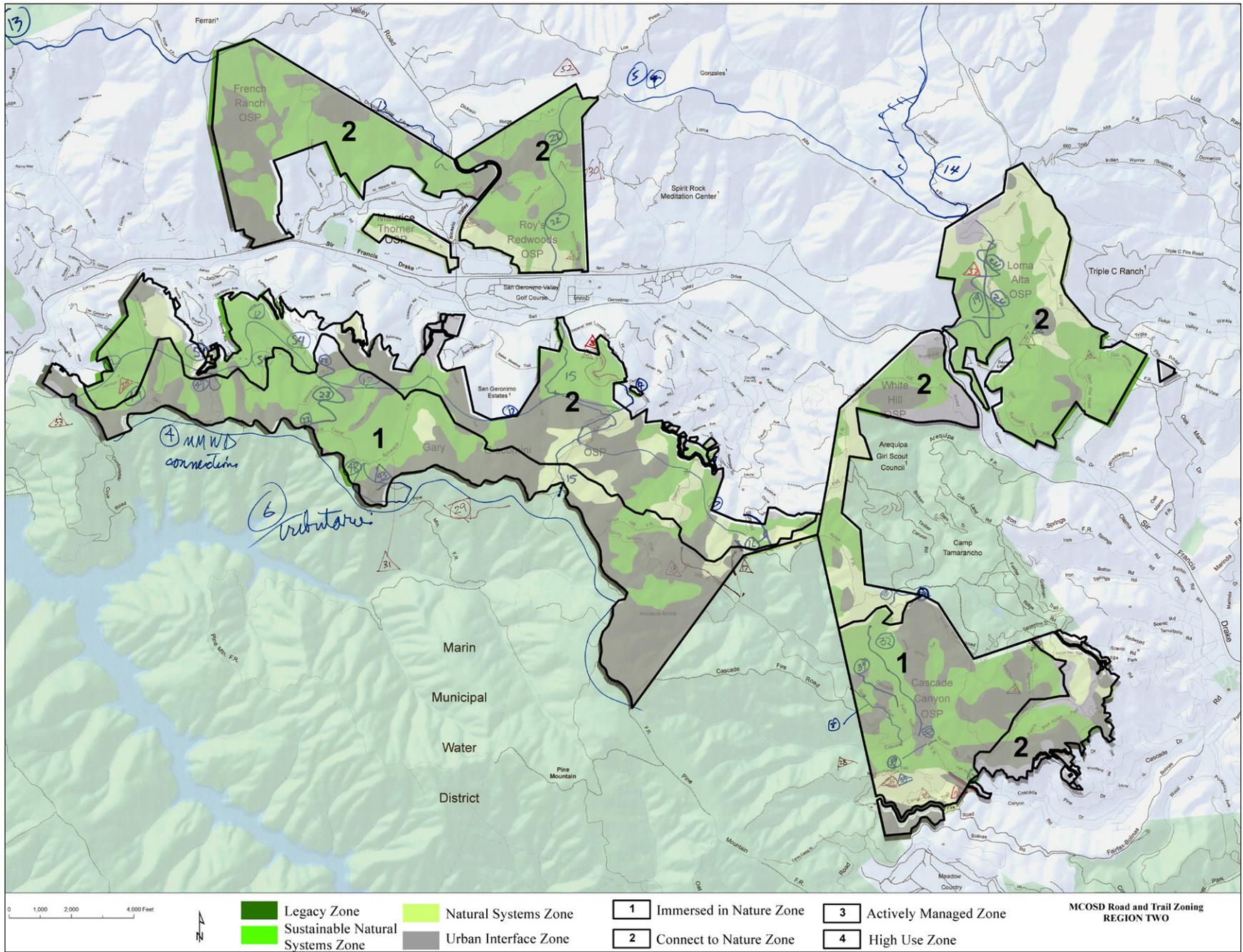


SOURCE: Marin County Open Space District, 2012

Marin County Open Space District

Figure 8-1

Sample Features for Zone 1-Immersed in Nature Zone



SOURCE: Marin County Open Space District, 2012

Marin County Open Space District

Figure 8-2

Visitor Use Management Zones in Region 2

8.4.2 Zone 2: Connect to Nature

Desired Future Condition: Preservation of sensitive resources, with visitors experiencing a primarily natural landscape with minimal disturbance.

Definition: Moderate to high resource protection and restoration of existing moderately degraded resources (see Figure 8-3). The Connect to Nature Zone would serve medium to high levels of visitor use, and provide for more varied uses and experiences (i.e., hiking, dog walking, bicycling and/or horseback riding), compared to the Immersed in Nature Zone.

Locations: The Connect to Nature Zone is comprised of Legacy and Sustainable Communities Zones as set forth in the MCOSD's Draft Vegetation Management Plan, in areas that have a less pristine environmental condition than areas within the Immersed in Nature Zone. The Connect to Nature Zone may still support sensitive resources that require protection.

The Connect to Nature Zone represents a subset of the total acreage within Legacy and Restoration Zones. Areas within the Connect to Nature Zone may not be well buffered from higher activity management zones, or from surrounding developed land uses. These areas are sometimes located along ridgelines, and are more linear in nature. Areas within the Connect to Nature Zone are typically close to residential areas and offer easy access and good views. The Connect to Nature Zone receives moderate to high levels of visitor use, and varied visitor experiences, including hiking, dog walking, bicycling and/or horseback riding. Visitor opportunities to experience solitude and be immersed in nature would be lower in the Connect to Nature Zone than in the Immersed in Nature Zone.

Special Management Policies:

1. New roads and trails will only be permitted with decommissioning of existing roads and trails;
2. Construction of new trails will be paired with trail decommissioning in order to have no net gain in disturbance and in mileage;
3. Site hardening and visitor movement controls (such as boardwalks, signage, or railing), strategic plantings, and controlled views, are examples of measures that will be undertaken to protect sensitive resources;
4. Within Stream Conservation Areas (as defined in the Marin Countywide Plan), roads and trails will be re-routed outside of stream setback zones, and incursions into the setback zone will be permitted only perpendicular to the thread of the stream;
5. Management opportunities include trail improvements to eliminate redundancy, reduce maintenance burden, and improve condition; and,
6. Non-system roads and trails will be actively decommissioned.

Where this Zone Would be Applied: Examples include portions of Blithedale Summit Preserve and Baltimore Canyon Preserve (see Figure 8-4).

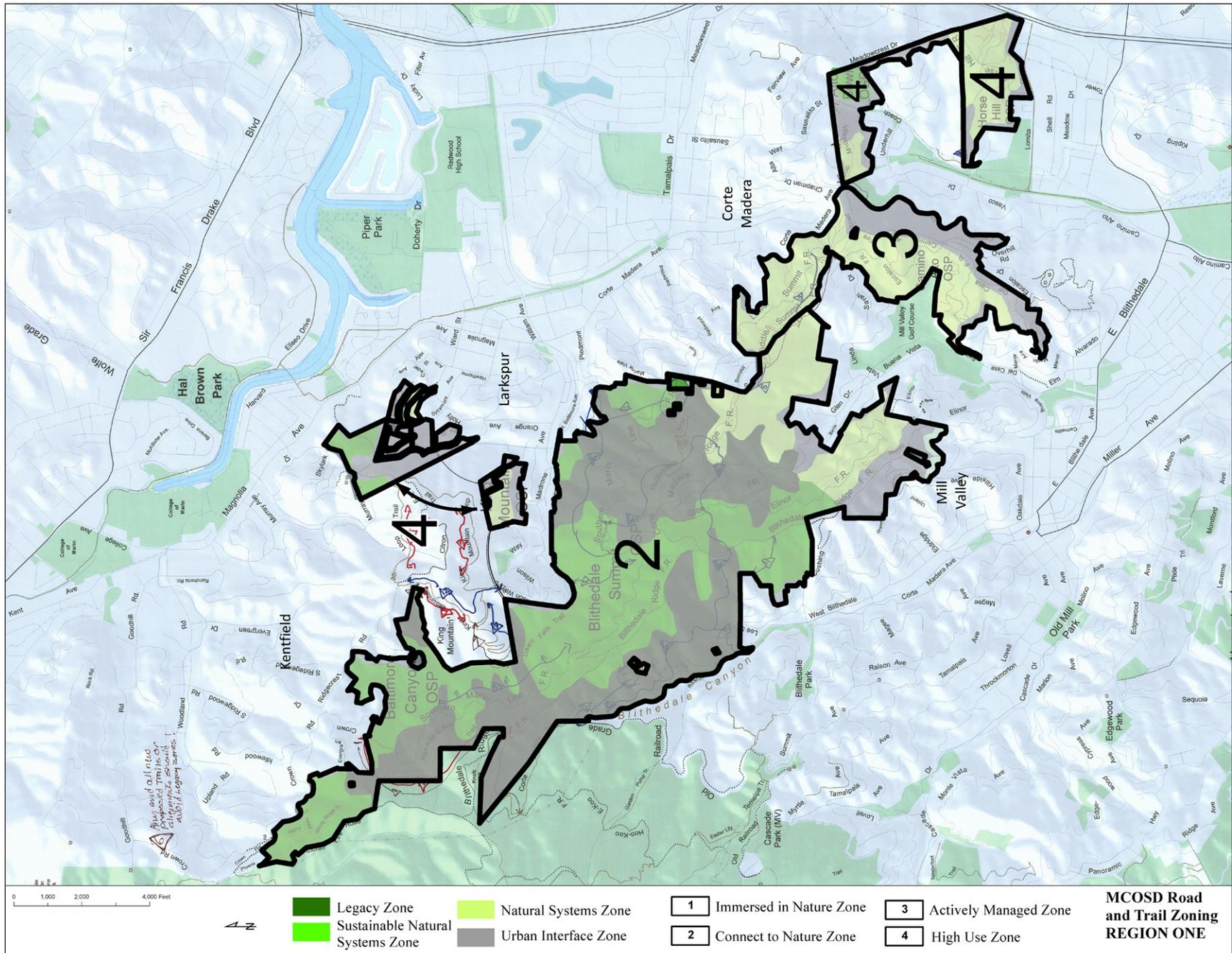


SOURCE: Marin County Open Space District, 2012

Marin County Open Space District

Figure 8-3

Sample Features for Zone 2-Connect to Nature Zone



SOURCE: Marin County Open Space District, 2012

Marin County Open Space District

Figure 8-4

Visitor Use Management Zones in Region 1

8.4.3 Zone 3: Actively Managed

Desired Future Condition: Provide for varied (e.g., hikers, dog walkers, pedestrians, bicyclists and/or equestrians) visitor experiences and protect the more limited (compared to Zones 1 and 2) sensitive resources present.

Definition: Moderate resource protection and restoration of existing degraded resources (see Figure 8-5). The Actively Managed Zone would serve existing and anticipated moderate to high levels of visitor use. A variety of user types in this zone may be encountered, such as pedestrians with or without dogs, equestrians, and bicycles.

Locations: The Actively Managed Zone is comprised of areas within the Draft Vegetation Management Plan's Sustainable Communities and Natural Landscape Zones in areas that may have moderately degraded environmental conditions. The Actively Managed Zone may still support sensitive resources that require protection. Areas within the Actively Managed Zone, where visitor use is moderate to high, are often located along ridgelines and are more linear in nature. Areas within the Actively Managed Zone are typically close to residential areas and offer easy access and good views. They may not be well buffered from surrounding developed land uses.

Special Management Policies:

1. Construction of new roads or trails in these areas will be paired with road/trail decommissioning in order to have no net gain in disturbance and mileage;
2. Within Stream Conservation Areas, roads and trails will be rerouted outside of stream setback zones, and incursions into the setback zone will be permitted only perpendicular to the thread of the stream;
3. Management opportunities include trail improvements to eliminate redundancy, reduce maintenance burden, and improve condition; and,
4. Non-system roads and trails will be actively decommissioned.

Where this Zone Would be Applied: Examples include portions of Pacheco Valle Preserve and Loma Verde Preserve (see Figure 8-6).

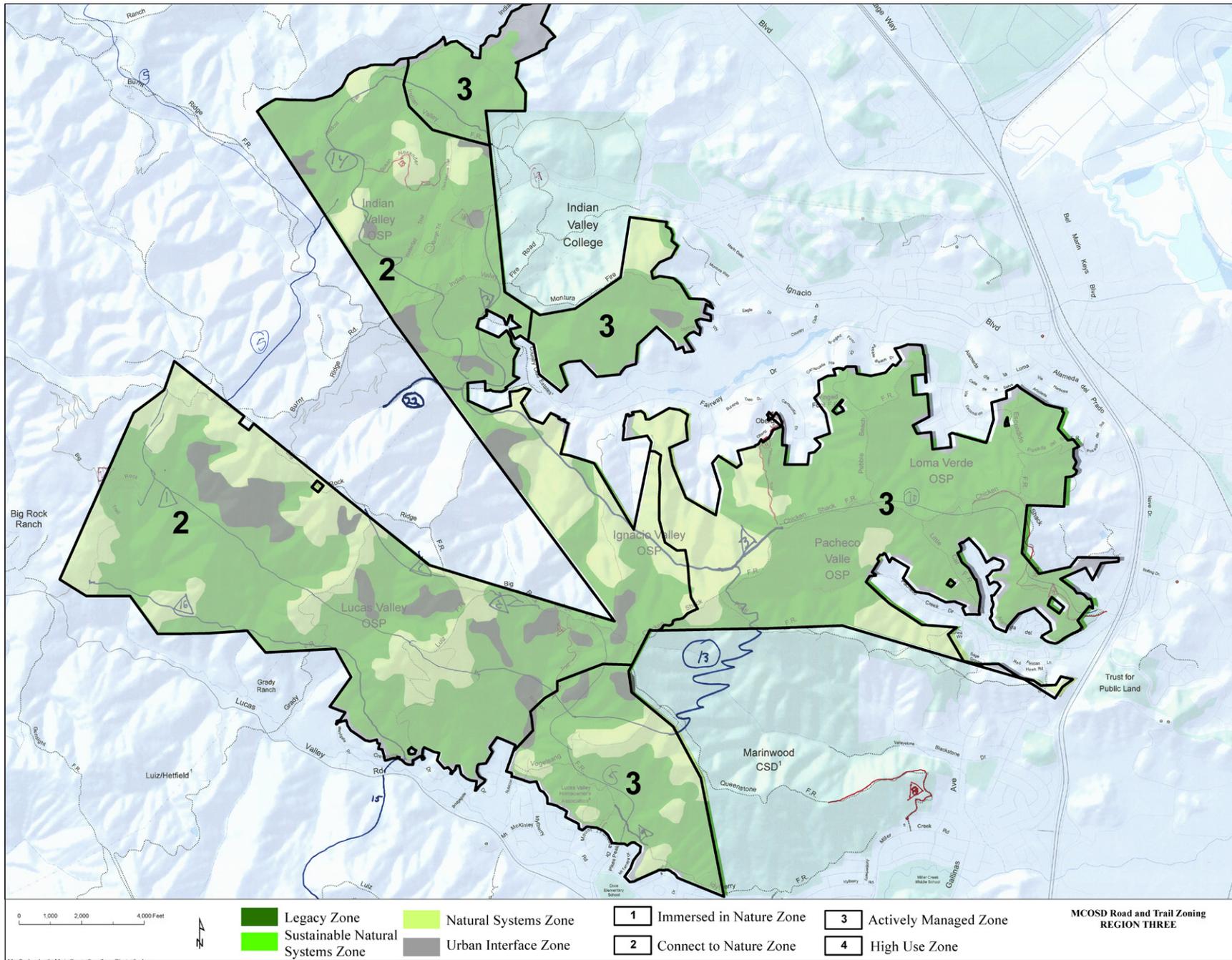


SOURCE: Marin County Open Space District, 2012

Marin County Open Space District

Figure 8-5

Sample Features for Zone 3-Actively Managed Zone



SOURCE: Marin County Open Space District, 2012

Marin County Open Space District

MCSO Road and Trail Zoning
REGION THREE

Figure 8-6

Visitor Use Management Zones in Region 3

8.4.4 Zone 4: High Use

Desired Future Condition: Multiple uses would be allowed with minimal restrictions.

Definition: Lands in the High Use Zone have existing and anticipated high levels of visitor use, where a variety of user types may be encountered, such as pedestrians with or without dogs, equestrians, and bicyclists (see Figure 8-7).

Locations: This zone consists of Draft Vegetation Management Plan Natural Landscape and Urban Interface Zones that receive high levels of visitor use. Lands in the High Use Zone are the most degraded of all lands within MCOSD's preserves, and tend to be located adjacent to private lands, some of which are developed with private residences.

Special Management Policies:

1. Management opportunities include improved site access and controlled parking to minimize disturbance to existing neighborhoods;
2. System roads and trails will be upgraded and improved to protect water quality and sensitive biological resources;
3. Fire fuel reduction will be accomplished if necessary in these areas;
4. Construction of new roads or trails will be paired with decommissioning in order to have no net gain in disturbance or mileage;
5. Within Stream Conservation Areas, roads and trails will be rerouted outside of stream setback zones, and incursions into the setback zone will be permitted only perpendicular to the thread of the stream; and,
6. Non-system roads and trails will be actively decommissioned.

Where Zone Would be Applied: An example is portions of Terra Linda Sleepy Hollow Preserve (see Figure 8-8).

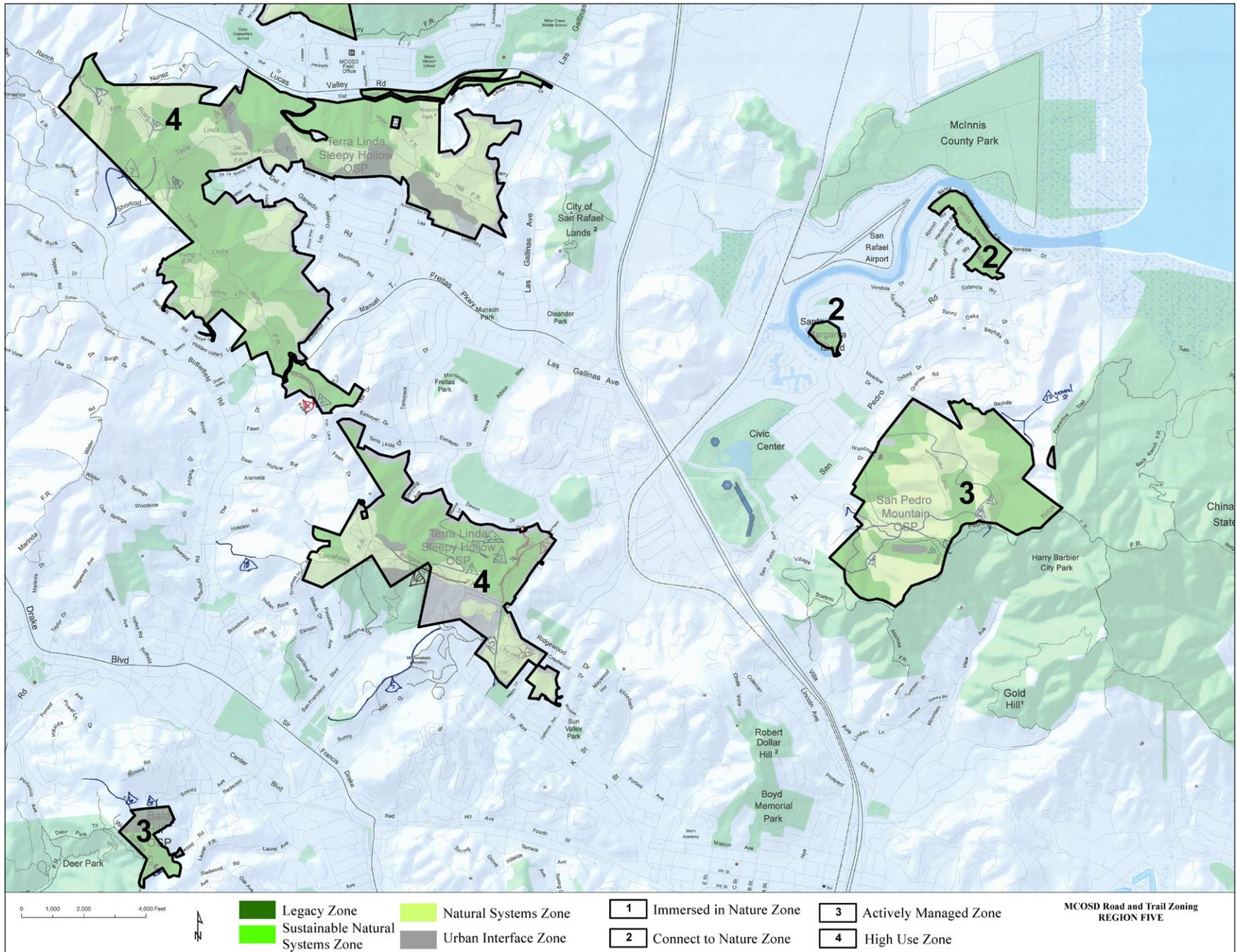


SOURCE: Marin County Open Space District, 2012

Marin County Open Space District

Figure 8-7

Sample Features for Zone 4-High Use Zone



SOURCE: Marin County Open Space District, 2012

Marin County Open Space District

Figure 8-8

Visitor Use Management Zones in Region 5

8.4.5 Special Zones

Special Zones are areas with the potential for restoration to attain Draft Vegetation Management Plan Legacy Zone status, and may be located within any of the four VEMZs. Potential restoration areas will be identified on a case-by-case basis according to the criteria for establishing areas for restoration set forth within Chapter 4 of the Draft Vegetation Management Plan. All areas identified for restoration by the Draft Vegetation Management Plan will be reclassified in the Road and Trail Management Plan from one of the four VEMZs to Special Zone. Within Special Zones, the policies of VEMZ Zones 1 and 2 will apply as appropriate. Upon completion of restoration to “Legacy Zone” status, the restored area will be reclassified from Special Zone to either VEMZ Zone 1 or 2 as appropriate. Preserve areas where special zones might be delineated include any trails in SCA’s in the Gary Giacomini Preserve, or trails recorded as “low use” in the Mt. Burdell Preserve.

Table 8-1 Key Attributes and Management Requirements for Visitor Use Management Zones 1 - 4			
Zone 1: Immersed in Nature	Zone 2: Connect to Nature	Zone 3: Actively Managed	Zone 4: High Use
Management Emphasis			
Emphasis on opportunities for visitors to experience solitude in a natural, undisturbed environment. Emphasis on road and trail decommissioning and use restrictions. Trail rehabilitation projects are permissible.	Emphasis on road and trail modifications to eliminate redundancy, reduce maintenance burden, and improve condition to protect sensitive resources. Road and trail surface hardening, visitor movement controls, (such as boardwalks, signage, or railings), strategic plantings, and controlled access to viewpoints would be examples of measures taken to protect sensitive resources.	Emphasis on road and trail modifications to eliminate redundancy, reduce maintenance burden, and improve condition to protect sensitive resources and support moderate to high levels of visitor use. Road and trail surface hardening, visitor movement controls, (such as boardwalks, signage, or railings), strategic plantings, and controlled views would be examples of measures taken to protect sensitive resources. Maintaining connections between and among travel corridors will largely be addressed outside of the legacy and sustainable natural systems zones.	Emphasis will be on the improvement of visitor services and activities that improve resource protection. Examples may include road and trail surface hardening, improved access for physically challenged users, increased ranger presence, increased signage, and dog waste stations.

Table 8-1 Key Attributes and Management Requirements for Visitor Use Management Zones 1 - 4			
Zone 1: Immersed in Nature	Zone 2: Connect to Nature	Zone 3: Actively Managed	Zone 4: High Use
Policies Regarding New Roads and Trails			
<p>Construction of new roads and trails to achieve connectivity objectives may occur in this zone only when necessary to enhance environmental protection, and only when there is a corresponding net reduction of trail mileage and disturbance in the same zone or other “1” zones in the vicinity. There will be a 1:2 acreage ratio between new roads and trails and decommissioning of undesignated existing roads or trails.</p>	<p>Construction of new roads and trails will be permitted only with corresponding decommissioning of undesignated existing roads and trails at a 1:1 acreage ratio in the same zone, or in Zones 1 and 2 in the vicinity.</p>	<p>Construction of new roads and trails will be permitted only with corresponding decommissioning of undesignated existing roads and trails at a 1:1 acreage ratio in the same zone, or in Zones 1, 2 or 3 in the vicinity.</p>	<p>Construction of new roads and trails will be permitted only with corresponding decommissioning of undesignated existing roads and trails at a 1:1 acreage ratio in the same zone, or any zone in the vicinity.</p>
Policies Regarding Existing Roads and Trails			
<p>Existing roads and trails will be re-routed outside of Draft VMP Legacy zones. Incursions into the Draft VMP Legacy zone will be permitted when no other option is available to maintain or establish a road/trail connection. Existing roads and trails will be re-routed outside of stream conservation areas and at grade stream crossings will be minimized. Incursions into the SCA will be permitted when no other option is available to maintain or establish a road/trail connection. Existing roads will be converted to trails unless: a) prevented by license, lease, or easement; b) a road passes through multiple zones and a consistent width is needed to maintain drivability. Redundant roads and trails will be eliminated. Road and trail conditions will be improved to reduce maintenance and protect sensitive resources.</p>	<p>Existing roads and trails will be re-routed outside of Draft VMP Legacy zones. Incursions into the Draft VMP Legacy zone will be permitted when no other option is available to maintain or establish a road/trail connection. Existing roads and trails will be re-routed outside of stream conservation areas and at grade stream crossings would be minimized. Incursions into the SCA will be permitted when no other option is available to maintain or establish a road/trail connection. Redundant roads and trails will be eliminated. Road and trail conditions will be improved to reduce maintenance and protect sensitive resources.</p>	<p>Existing roads and trails would be re-routed outside of stream conservation areas and at grade stream crossings will be minimized. Incursions into the SCA will be permitted when no other option is available to maintain or establish a road/trail connection. Redundant roads and trails will be eliminated. Road and trail conditions would be improved to reduce maintenance, protect sensitive resources, and support moderate to high levels of use.</p>	<p>Existing roads and trails will be re-routed outside of stream conservation areas and at grade stream crossings will be minimized. Incursions into the SCA will be permitted when no other option is available to maintain or establish a road/trail connection. Redundant roads and trails will be eliminated. Road and trail conditions would be improved to reduce maintenance, protect sensitive resources, and support high levels of use.</p>
Policies Regarding Visitor Use			

Table 8-1 Key Attributes and Management Requirements for Visitor Use Management Zones 1 - 4			
Zone 1: Immersed in Nature	Zone 2: Connect to Nature	Zone 3: Actively Managed	Zone 4: High Use
Mountain bikers, equestrians, and pedestrians with dogs or other domestic animals must stay on designated roads and trails. No off-road or off-trail use will be permitted, for any user types, except to water or rest horses or pack animals. Low to moderate levels of current and anticipated use. Penalties will be increased for violations of MCOSD code. Dogs are required to be leashed.	Mountain bikers, equestrians, and pedestrians with dogs or other domestic animals must stay on designated roads and trails. No off-road or off-trail use will be permitted, for any user types, except to water or rest horses or pack animals. Moderate levels of current and anticipated use. Existing dog policies and ordinances apply.	Mountain bikers, equestrians, and pedestrians with dogs or other domestic animals must stay on designated roads and trails. No off-road or off-trail use will be permitted, for any user types, except to water or rest horses or pack animals. Moderate to high levels of current and anticipated use. Existing dog policies and ordinances apply.	Mountain bikers, equestrians, and pedestrians with dogs or other domestic animals must stay on designated roads and trails. Off-road or off-trail use will be permitted for pedestrians without dogs. Equestrians may go off road or trail but only for watering or resting horses or pack animals. High levels of current and anticipated use. Existing dog policies and ordinances apply.

Source: Planning Partners, 2012.

8.5 Special Uses

In addition to providing public access for recreational uses, MCOSD lands also host numerous special activities, such as commercial dog walking, special use recreational events, and access for utility providers such as Verizon and PG&E. There is a need for a consistent and structured approach for the MCOSD to respond to requests for special uses. New policies to accomplish this are described below.

8.5.1 Special Use Policies

Policies for special uses pertain to organized recreation activities, and the need for external agencies (e.g. PG&E, Verizon) to have administrative access to preserve lands.

RTMP.SP-1: Permit Required for Land Management or Utility Activities. All agencies and service providers requesting access to open space lands will be required to obtain a permit from MCOSD detailing the purpose and timing of their activities. The MCOSD may impose conditions necessary for the protection of the environment. Such conditions may include, but will not be limited to, the timing of the activity with respect to seasonal and weather concerns, and the location of the activity. An administrative fee will be charged by MCOSD for reviewing and granting any permits. Additional fees may be incurred by the permit applicant for administration and monitoring of the activity by MCOSD staff, or if CEQA compliance or any environmental permits are required. MCOSD insurance and indemnity requirements will apply.

RTMP.SP-2: Permit Required for Organized Recreational Activities or Events. All private parties or other public agencies requesting access to MCOSD lands for recreation-related, or other, special events will be required to complete and obtain a permit detailing the purpose and timing of their activities. The MCOSD may impose conditions necessary for the safety of participants and for protection of the environment. Such conditions may include, but will not be limited to, the timing of the activity with respect to seasonal and weather concerns, the number of participants, and the location of the activity. An administrative fee will be charged by MCOSD for reviewing and granting any permits. Additional fees may be incurred by the permit applicant for administration and monitoring of the event by MCOSD staff, or if CEQA compliance or any environmental permits are required. MCOSD insurance and indemnity requirements will apply.

RTMP.SP-3: Prohibition on Unofficial, Non-Sponsored Group Activities. Any unofficial, non-sponsored outdoor recreation event involving more than 15 participants is prohibited.

Preliminary Draft

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