

DATE: July 12, 2017
PRESERVE: Gary Giacomini Open Space Preserve
PROJECT: Hunt Camp Trail Improvement Project
STAFF: Jon Campo

Project Summary

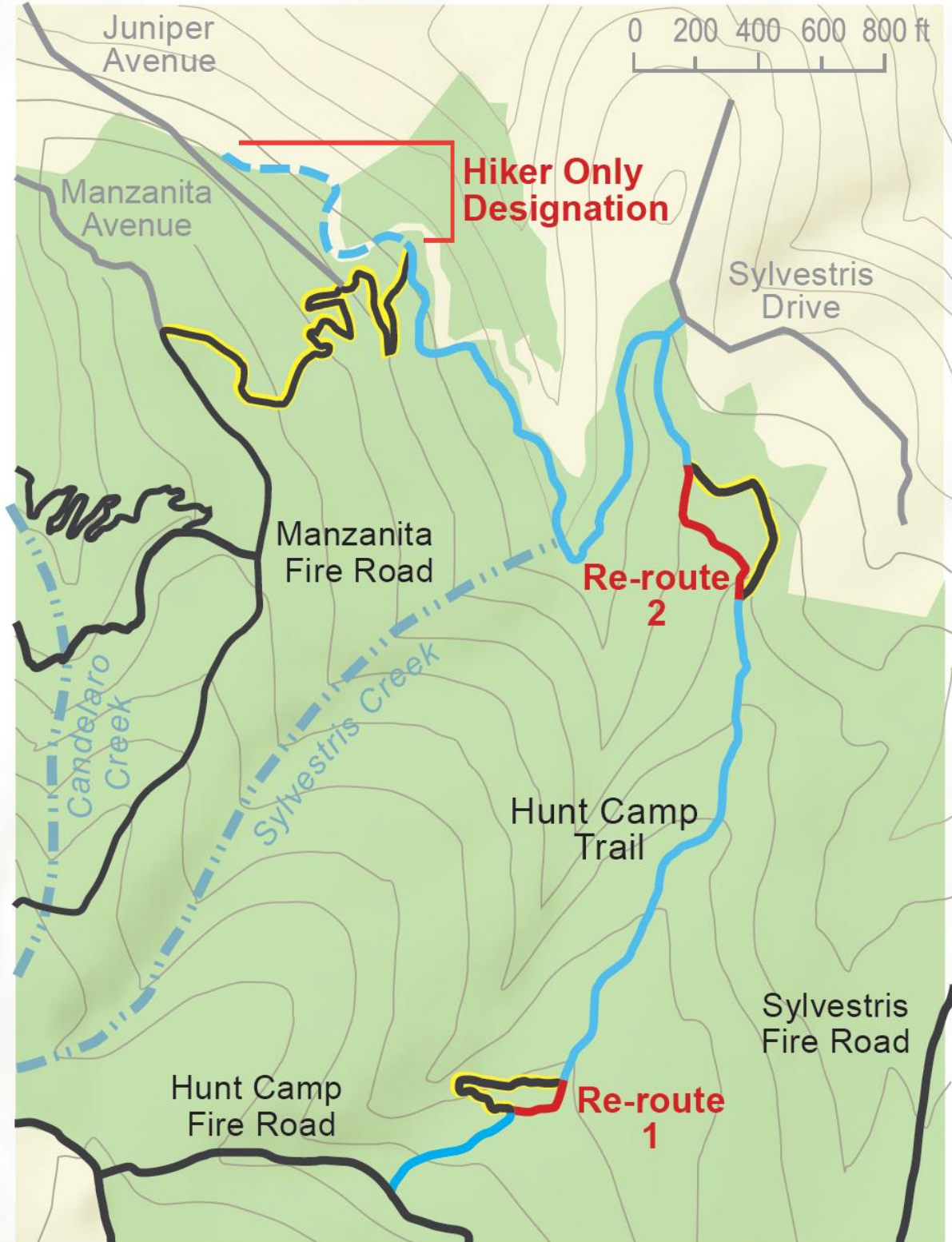
The project would improve the Hunt Camp Trail, including the construction of two trail reroutes (Reroute 1 and 2 on Upper Hunt Camp) and the installation of wet crossings and drainage to support incorporation of the trail into the MCOSD trail system as a hiker/biker designation. These improvements would ensure the trail is properly drained and would minimize environmental impacts, while improving user safety. The project proposes to establish a new connector trail for hikers and cyclists, which would be constructed from the Lower Hunt Camp Trail to Manzanita Fire Road to respect private property rights and reduce unsanctioned trail use through bands of chaparral. Additionally, a small portion of the existing Hunt Camp Trail, connecting to Juniper Avenue, would be designated as hiking only, and would continue to provide a neighborhood connection to open space. To further reduce environmental impacts in the Gary Giacomini Preserve, the proposed project includes the decommissioning of over 6,000 linear feet of unsanctioned trails to reduce erosion and habitat fragmentation.

The proposed realignments, drain dips, and other actions to protect the environment and improve the user experience would improve the sustainability of the trail consistent with the RTMP policies, applicable BMPs, and trail design standards. These measures would substantially reduce impacts from erosion and runoff into nearby drainages, thereby reducing sedimentation into the Lagunitas Creek Watershed. These improvements would reduce the trail's physical impacts to the preserve and watershed. Based on the recommendations of the feasibility study, MCOSD is proposing the following project components:

- Upper Hunt Camp improvements;
- Lower Hunt Camp improvements;
- Construction of new hiker/biker connector trail from the Lower Hunt Camp Trail to Manzanita Fire Road and subsequent designation;
- Designate a portion of existing Hunt Camp Trail as a hiker only trail; and
- Decommissioning a total of over 6,000 linear feet of unsanctioned trails for five segments of unsanctioned trails, identified as trails 25440, 25552, 25710, and 25810.

See Attachment 1 for a complete project description and trail details.

Figure 1: Project Map



- Trail Reroute/New Trail
- Trail Alignment Decommission
- Hiker/Biker Trail
- Hiker Only Trail

Background

The Marin County Open Space District (MCOSD) road and trail projects are part of a science-based, public inclusive, comprehensive Road and Trail Management Plan (RTMP), which addresses the complex challenges of the MCOSD roads and trails. The MCOSD developed the plan over the course of four years based on extensive outreach and public input.

The MCOSD designs and implements its road and trail projects to reduce the environmental impact of the road and trail network and enhance visitor experience and safety. The RTMP establishes a process whereby members of the public, working alone or in coordination with others, can submit proposals for projects that would advance the goals of the plan. Proposed projects must demonstrate familiarity and compliance with the RTMP's adopted standards and procedures.

Public Comments

On October 3, 2015, the MCOSD hosted a community workshop in Lagunitas on the proposed projects in Region 2 (in which the proposed project is located) to solicit comments and feedback on trail designations and priorities in the region. Staff presented a proposed formal road and trail designation for Region 2 open space preserves (French Ranch, Maurice Thorne Memorial, Roy's Redwoods, Gary Giacomini, Loma Alta, White Hill, and Cascade Canyon), solicited public input, and described the public process to suggest changes to the proposed designated trail system. Improvements to the Hunt Camp Trail were identified on the Region 2 designation map. Following the workshop, the public had an opportunity to view and comment on the proposed road and trail system for Region 2.

The MCOSD published the Hunt Camp Trail Improvement Project Description and Fact Sheet on April 13, 2017, and solicited comments from the community during a 30-day administrative comment period. The comment period ended on May 15, 2017, and a total of 134 comments were received from members of the community. Comments included the following stated concerns:

- The trail decommissionings would reduce recreational opportunities and increase user conflicts;
- Improvements to the Hunt Camp Trail should maintain the narrow and primitive nature of this trail as possible.
- Improving Hunt Camp Trail would reduce the environmental score and the decommissioning of the other trails are not needed to offset impacts.
- Hunt Camp Trail from the Hunt Camp Fire Road should not be designated as Hike/Bike Only. It should be designated as Hike Only.
- Designating Hunt Camp Trail would encourage mountain bikes at unsafe speeds.
- Decommissioning Road 25552 and 25810 would push riders on to Conifer Fire Road, which is unsafe for all parties.
- This project is narrow, steep and goes through environmentally sensitive areas.
- The project site is within northern spotted owl habitat and the project may affect the northern spotted owls.
- The project may increase bike use.
- Bikers don't need parking to access the trail.
- The project is unnecessary and would have detrimental effect on the environment.
- The project traverses the "Legacy Zone" which is intended to protect sensitive plant species.
- Reducing the ecological footprint of the trail would best be accomplished by decommissioning the Upper Trail, but allowing the Lower Trail to remain open to hikers as a social trail, rather than creating a mountain biker/hiker trail in a Legacy Zone.
- The project violates Policy SW 22, which protects the Legacy Zone, and sets a precedent for violating this critical environmental policy.
- Trail segments are steep and probably exceed 10 percent. More specific information on gradients should be provided for public comment.
- The two proposed reroutes would not solve the safety problems inherent in combining hiking and biking.

- The number of streams and springs indicates that the project site is an important part of the watershed.
- The project increases trail density and saturation in this area, especially considering the two adjacent fire roads to its east and west.
- The project would facilitate the Giacomini Preserve becoming a popular mountain bike destination.

Environmental Review

The MCOSD prepared an evaluation which determined that pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Section 15162, the 2014 RTMP EIR adequately analyzes proposed project, and the project does not require subsequent environmental review (see Attachment 1). The MCOSD filed a notice of determination with the Marin County Clerk and the state office of Planning and Research on July 12, 2017, in compliance with CEQA (Attachment 2).

Consistency Analysis

Countywide Plan Consistency

The proposed project is consistent with the Marin Countywide Plan (CWP) for the following reasons:

- A. The project is consistent with the CWP woodland preservation policy (BIO-1.3) because the project would not entail the irreplaceable removal of a substantial number of mature, native trees.
- B. The project is consistent with the CWP special-status species protection policy (BIO-2.2) because the project would not remove habitat for special-status species of plants or animals.
- C. The project is consistent with the CWP natural transition and connection policies (BIO 2.3 and BIO 2.4) because the project would not substantially alter the margins along riparian corridors, wetlands, baylands, or woodlands.
- D. The project is consistent with the CWP stream and wetland conservation policies (BIO-3.1 and CWP BIO-4.1) because the proposed trail would not encroach into any Stream Conservation Areas or Wetland Conservation Areas other than to support the continued use of the existing trails and improve creek crossings.
- E. The project is consistent with CWP water quality policies as the project would reduce soil erosion (WR-1.3, WR-2.2, WR-2.3) because the project would reduce the trail's slope and improve drainage.
- F. The project is consistent with CWP seismic hazard policies (CWP Policies EH-2.1, EH-2.3, and CD-2.8) because the project site is not constrained by unusual geotechnical problems, such as existing fault traces.
- G. The project is consistent with CWP trail policies (TRL-1.1 and-1.2) because it would enhance and expand the existing countywide trail system, improve access to or between public lands, and enhancing public trail use opportunities for all user groups.

Marin County Open Space District Strategic Plan

- A. The project is consistent with the Goals 1 and 2 because it would expand the network of trails in a manner that protects, restores, and preserves the natural systems of the preserve and implement land management best management practices.
- B. The project is consistent with Goal 3 because it would improve accessibility to the Gary Giacomini Open Space Preserve and provide a connection for the local communities that would facilitate bicycle transportation.

Road and Trail Management Plan Consistency

The proposed project is consistent with the Road and Trail Management Plan (RTMP) for the following reasons:

- A. The project would improve access and provide a range of desired user experiences within the Gary Giacomini Open Space Preserve by improving the trail conditions, reducing slopes, and improving drainage (Policy 1).
- B. The project would improve sustainability and visitor safety by realigning the trail to reduce steep grades, improve sightlines, install drainage improvements, and establishing clear signage (Policy 2, 4, 7, and 9).
- C. The project would minimize impacts to sensitive resources by designing the alignment to reduce trail redundancy and improve habitat connectivity, improving drainage, reduce sedimentation to the local waterways, and maintain habitat for wildlife (Policy 3).
- D. The project would enhance road and trail connectivity by providing a link between the communities of Fairfax, San Anselmo, and the San Geronimo Valley (Policy 5).

Inclusive Access Plan Consistency

The proposed project is consistent with the Inclusive Access Plan for the following reasons:

- A. The project site was not identified as one of the seven trails selected for inclusion in the Access and Discovery Trail system.
- B. Accessibility standards do not apply to the project. While proposed improvements exceed routine maintenance and the project would adopt the Hunt Camp Trail into the MCOSD trail system as a hike/bike trail, the project lacks an accessible trailhead and does not connect to another trail that is substantially compliant.
- C. The terrain at the project site prevents compliance because of the steep topography and obstacles such as rocks and extensive root systems within the trail corridor. While the proposed project would improve accessibility and safety by reducing the trail gradient, improving site lines, and improving drainage, compliance cannot be reasonably met without substantial grading, earthwork, and major tree and vegetation removal, including the removal of sensitive plant species protected by state and federal law. The narrow trail width (2-3 feet) is also a substantial barrier to meeting accessibility standards.

Action

Marin County Open Space District hereby approves the Hunt Camp Trail Improvement Project. This decision certifies the proposed project's conformance with the Marin CWP, the MCOSD Strategic Plan, and the Marin County Parks Road and Trail Management Plan. Building Permit, additional permits and/or approvals may be required from federal and state agencies, and the MCOSD shall obtain the approvals prior to construction.

Max Korten, General Manager
Marin County Open Space District

7/12/17

Date

Attachments:

- 1. CEQA Consistency Analysis
- 2. Notice of Determination