

## MEMORANDUM

**TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

**FROM: JOEL ROJAS, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR**

**DATE: MARCH 12, 2014**

**SUBJECT: INTER-JURISDICTIONAL TRAIL MATTERS BETWEEN THE CITY OF RANCHO PALOS VERDES AND NEIGHBORING CITIES**

Project Manager: Ara Mihranian, Deputy Director of Community Development

### **DISCUSSION**

On January 15, 2013, the City Council, in response to public concerns regarding the loss of trail connections between neighboring jurisdictions, directed Staff to monitor and provide quarterly reports to the Council on inter-jurisdictional trail matters. In May, the Council was provided with the first quarterly report on trail matters for each of the three neighboring cities. The following is the latest quarterly report on inter-jurisdictional trail matters. It should be noted that since the last report in December 2013, no significant changes have occurred to the status of trails connecting to neighboring cities as reported below.

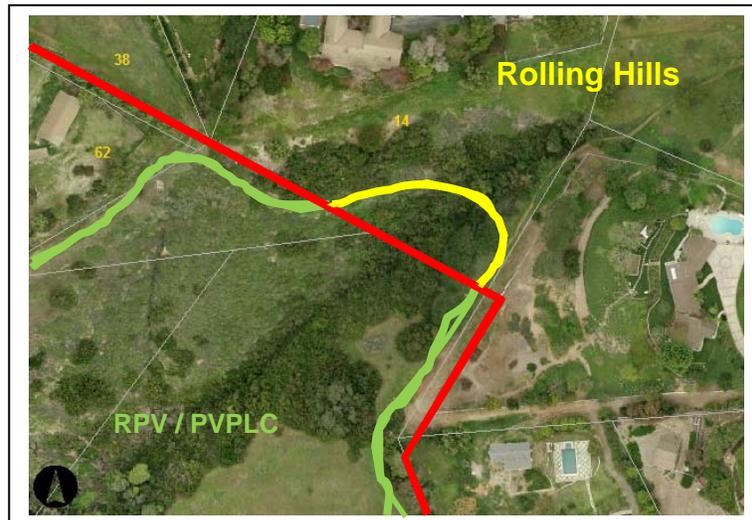
### **Rolling Hills**

The following is updated information, if applicable, involving trail connectivity issues with the City of Rolling Hills:

1. Fire Station Trail and Rim Trail Connection (Portuguese Bend Reserve)

In August 2011, it was reported that Ms. Cathy Nichols, the owner of property traversed by an unofficial trail historically used by the public as a link between the Rim and Fires Stations Trails in the Portuguese Bend Reserve, closed the trail across her property (shown in yellow on the following page). Ms. Nichols and the Rolling Hills Community Association informed the City and the PVPLC that the

trail traversing her private property would be physically closed with barriers. To help alleviate the vandalism of the barriers she installed at her property line, the City installed private property signs and signs notifying trail users of the trail closure. Additionally, the rangers increased their presence in the area.

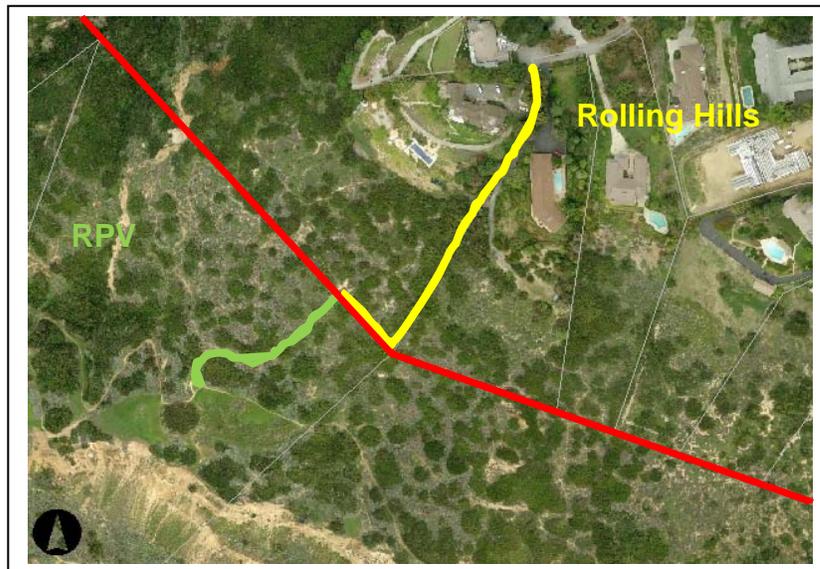


In response to Ms. Nichols trail closure, City and PVPLC Staff began to explore alternative trail routes within the Preserve boundary limits. Ultimately, it was concluded that due to the steep topography and the surrounding protected habitat, a trail connection could not be created without impacts to protected habitat, significant grading or construction of a bridge. Thus, at this time the trail connection traversing Ms. Nichols' property remains closed. A trail connection on City-owned property in the Portuguese Bend Reserve has not been created but has been identified as a high priority project for the PVPLC when funding sources, such as grants, become available.

The City and the PVPLC continue to monitor unauthorized trail construction activity in this area through sensitive habitat. Furthermore, the City continues to replace the vandalized "no trespassing" signs in this area. Lastly, Ms. Nichols continues to express no interest in realigning the trail nor re-opening the trail on her property.

## 2. Packsaddle Trail (Forrestal Reserve)

In 2001, when the trails map was approved by the City Council for the Forrestal Reserve, the Council approved trails plan included the Packsaddle Trail that leads up to the City boundary with Rolling Hills (see image below). At that time, it was the City's understanding that an access easement existed in the City of Rolling Hills that led to Packsaddle Road East in the City of Rolling Hills (presumed access easement shown in yellow in the image below).

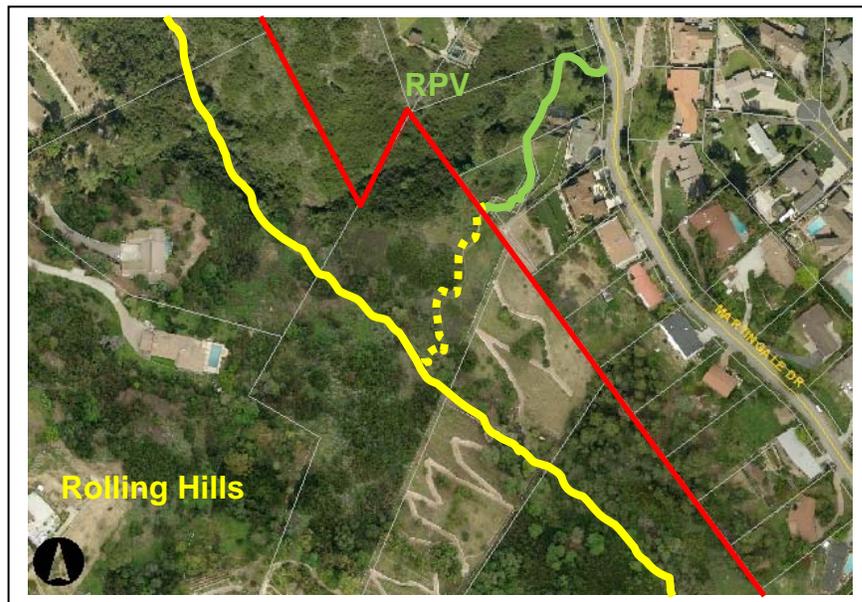


Subsequently, the City of Rolling Hills has closed the trail at the City's boundary line because trail users coming from the Forrestral Reserve were not obtaining appropriate permission from the City of Rolling Hills and walking into the backyards of private property. During a meeting with Rolling Hills Officials, it was expressed that neither the City of Rolling Hills nor its Community Association intends to provide and maintain trail access between Packsaddle Road East and the Packsaddle Trail in the Forrestral Reserve. In fact, City Staff was told that a fence is planned to be installed to protect the adjacent private property owners from trespassers. Rolling Hills officials requested that the City close the Packsaddle Trail, remove the trail from the City's Trails Map, and install signs indicating that the public trail ends at the Mariposa Trail junction. While City Staff does not intend to close the Packsaddle Trail nor remove the trail from the Preserve's Trails Maps, City has agreed to install signs notifying trail users that the Packsaddle Trail ends and does not provide through access. Said signs will be installed within the coming week.

### 3. Martingale Trail

The City's Martingale Trail (shown as a green solid line) extends from the City-owned Martingale Park (next to Martingale Drive) to the boundary line with the City of Rolling Hills, at which point the City's public trail terminates. However historically, trail users (particularly equestrians) have continued past the City boundary traversing private property in Rolling Hills to connect to the Willow Springs Trail (shown in solid yellow line) in the City of Rolling Hills. In January 2013, the City was contacted by the property owner in Rolling Hills whose property is traversed by trail users (Mrs. Cheryl Marcz) indicating her interest in donating a portion of her property to the City of Rancho Palos Verdes as a way to

eliminate her liability concerns caused by trespassers onto her property. Seeing this as an opportunity to complete the existing gap between the City's Martingale Trail and Rolling Hills' Willow Spring trail, as last reported, City Staff met with the involved parties in June to discuss the details of the offer. City Staff expressed an interest in Mrs. Marcz' offer but wanted to make sure that the land offer would guarantee public access from PRV to the Willow Springs Trail in the City of Rolling Hills. Rolling Hills officials indicated that the matter would need to be considered by the Community Association Board.



City Staff was notified in September 2013 that the Community Association Board reached an agreement with Mrs. Marcz and the Association will have a dedicated public trail easement across her property that will connect to the City's Martingale Trail. Once the trail easement has been dedicated, the trail will be accepted into the RHCA trail system and accessible by the public provided appropriate permits are obtained from the Community Association (the typical protocol for use of trails in the City of Rolling Hills). According to the Community Association Staff, the trail will be for pedestrian and equestrian use only (as with all trails in the City of Rolling Hills), and a three-rail fence will be constructed along Mrs. Marcz' property line with an opening for trail access. It was last reported that the trail easement will likely take approximately four months to record. At this time, the easement has not been recorded and Staff will continue to monitor the progress of this trail connection and will continue to update the Council and the public.

#### 4. Library Trail

As reported in the last Inter-Jurisdictional Trails Report, the City's Conceptual Trails Plan (CTP) identifies the Library Trail (shown as a green solid line below) as an existing, but undedicated trail, that begins at the City boundary line with Rolling Hills in the Colt Canyon area above the Miraleste Library and extends eastward to Palos Verdes Drive East, at which point the trail crosses the roadway at the existing school crosswalk. In order to be formally considered a City public trail, the CTP identifies the need for easements from various private property owners, including the Library District.



The City was contacted last summer by a Boy Scout about constructing the City's segment of the Library Trail as his Eagle Scout project. The Scout was informed that in order for the trail work to occur, permission would have to be obtained from each respective property owner (the library district and three private property owners) and appropriate trail easements would have to be secured to absolve the property owners from any liability resulting from the public's use of the trail. The Boy Scout engaged some of the property owners, including the Library District, who expressed an interest in formalizing this trail segment. Unfortunately, due to time constraints associated with completing his Eagle Scout project, the Scout decided to pursue a different project with the City of Rolling Hills Estates. However, as a result of being contacted, the Library Board of Trustees considered whether to dedicate a trail easement to the City at its September 19<sup>th</sup> meeting.

City Staff attended the September 19<sup>th</sup> meeting at which time the Board unanimously agreed to 1) not allow the Eagle Scout trail improvement project to proceed citing safety concerns related with the trail interface with the library

driveway and parking area; and 2) to defer any decision on granting an easement to the City of Rancho Palos Verdes until a time the City requests such an easement, and that no future easement be granted to the City unless concerns with safety and maintenance can be addressed by the City, along with protecting possible future driveway and parking improvements. The Board added that in order to consider granting some form of a trail easement or agreement to the City, the other three owners of the property the trail traverses should also be in agreement to grant a similar easement to the City otherwise the trail could not be implemented as described in the CTP. The September 19<sup>th</sup> Board of Library Trustee Staff Report can be found on the Palos Verdes Library District website at the following link:

[www.pvld.org/about/trustees/meetings](http://www.pvld.org/about/trustees/meetings)

Additionally, a development application was recently submitted to the Planning Department for the construction of a new single-family residence located on vacant property at 29073 PVDE. This lot is one of the three privately owned properties abutting the proposed Library Trail route. Staff recently met with the new property owner to discuss, among other things, the possibility of dedicated a trail easement across the subject property to accommodate the Library Trail. The new property owner did not express an interest in dedicating such a trail easement.

In light of this information including the Board's decision, Staff is not going to pursue implementation of the Library Trail at this time and instead focus on other trail implementation projects in the City. If any Council member is interested in further exploring implementation of the Library Trail, the item can be raised as a possible future Study Session item.

### **Rolling Hills Estates**

At this time, there are no trail connectivity issues to report with the City of Rolling Hills Estates.

### **Palos Verdes Estates**

It was last reported that there are currently two trail connectivity issues with the City of Palos Verdes Estates. The first involves the City's segment of the California Coastal Trail (CCT), which was recently completed. To date, City Staff continues to work with Staff from the City of Palos Verdes Estates to ensure that the City's segment of the CCT that will be constructed in the Palos Verdes Drive West roadway median (as an upcoming landscape median project) will connect to the existing trail in the City of Palos Verdes Estates' roadway median (see below).



Based on this information, City Staff informed Coastal Commission Staff that it did not intend to pursue any action against the property owner to reinstate a public trail that traverses their private property, and that if a public trail is desired by the Coastal Commission, that it would be the City's preference for the Coastal Commission to assume primary responsibility for resolving this matter and the alleged violation with the installation of the 6-foot tall chain link fencing. Thus, at this time, this trail matter is currently being pursued by the Coastal Commission and City Staff will continue to monitor this matter and update the Council.

### **Los Angeles County**

As part of the San Ramon Stabilization Project, it has come to City Staff's attention that a much desired connection to Friendship Park from the San Ramon Reserve (a sub-area of the Palos Verdes Nature Preserve) can be achieved through the project area without having to secure easements from another jurisdiction. This is because as part of this project, the County of Los Angeles agreed to give the City of Rancho Palos Verdes approximately 5 acres of land that will allow the City to construct a trail within the construction area that will connect to an existing trail at Friendship Park, as roughly illustrated in the map below. Construction of this trail connection is pending.

