

**Upper Filiorum Trails Workshop
Responses to Comments
September 8 – 29, 2010**

Upper Filiorum Trails Workshop - General Comments Summary

CONNECTION TO THREE SISTERS

The City and the PVPLC intend to identify and pursue a connection between Three Sisters and Upper Filiorum. Currently, there is no funding available to create an appropriate and sustainable connection (i.e. footbridge or engineered trail work). The PVPLC and the City will seek grant opportunities to seek funding to construct such a connection. The Trails map will be updated to show a clouded area where future possible connections can occur.

TRAIL IDENTIFICATION PROCESS

Trail considerations provide the framework for the trail identification process. As a result, the current trail configurations are a result of historic social trail usage. Some trails were removed from the trail plan because they were considered duplicate trails, unsustainable trails, or they were located in sensitive habitats. This includes the Matterhorn trail, which is considered unsustainable in its current state due to its steep grade and high erosion potential. The Matterhorn trail cuts through sensitive species habitat, such as coastal sage scrub supporting gnatcatchers and cactus wrens, and its use should be discontinued to preserve this habitat.

TRAIL USAGE DECISIONS

Trails were designated as multi-use unless trail steepness or line-of-sight issues were thought to create unsafe conditions, or if erosion was considered a problem.

The draft plan identifies an area for hikers and equestrians only (i.e. Gary Gulch). The Eucalyptus trail was designated pedestrian/equestrian because it leads to trails with this designation in the Portuguese Bend Reserve, and for its value as a serene and relaxing area. Bicyclists will have access to pedestrian/equestrian trails such as the Eucalyptus trail by walking their bikes. Bikes are allowed on “no bike” trails when they are walked.

ACCESS THRU PORTUGUESE BEND COMMUNITY AND OTHER PRIVATE PROPERTY

The City and the PVPLC has consulted with the Portuguese Bend Community Association regarding trail access between the Preserve and the Portuguese Bend community. The access point will be identified as leading to a private community on the trails map. Regarding the PV loop trail, the City is updating its master trail plan and will examine options for locating the loop trail in the general area that will not involve traversing private property.

TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS

The City and PVPLC will continue to seek grant opportunities to improve trails, including adding erosion control devices at stream crossings. When funding becomes available, stream crossings will be assessed, prioritized, and improved when feasible.

Constructing an overlook off the Kelvin Canyon trail (existing trail in one) will be considered.

ADDRESSING CONCERNS OF ALL USER GROUPS

All user groups were encouraged to voice their concerns through a variety of processes, including two widely publicized public workshops, a blog site, and email. Care was made to consider all comments received.

USER CONFLICT

It is expected that trail usage at Upper Filiorum may increase because of the connection with Three Sisters and Portuguese Bend resulting in the possibility of increased user conflicts. The draft trails plan intends to create an environment that is comfortable and safe for all trail users while minimizing user conflicts.

Techniques will be implemented to minimize user conflict on the trails such as utilizing rangers to enforce respectful trail use and trail signs. Signs will be placed to indicate proper trail behavior. Additionally, the City and the PVPLV are exploring educational opportunities to raise awareness such as a “Share the Trail” workshop.

The PVPLC and the City are in the process of conducting a wayfinding and signage inventory to determine what signs need to be removed, replaced or added.

EROSION

If the PVPLC and the City consider a trail to be severely eroding, consideration would be given to close or reroute the trail.

The following comments (indicated in bold black italics) were presented at the trail workshop and during the public comment period on the draft Upper Filiorum Trails Plan and responded to by PVPLC and RPV staff (indicated in purple).

1. Q – *What percentage of riders are technical?* [Question from DFG]

R: Percentage data on the skill level of trail users does not exist.

2. Q – *What is the miles of trails within the preserve?* [Question from DFG]

R: There are approximately 3.17 miles (16,756 ft) of trails in the Draft Upper Filiorum Trails Map. This count does not include the McBride Trail easement located outside of the Preserve. The Portuguese Bend Reserve contains 10.5 miles of trails and there are a total of 31.37 miles of trails open to the public within the overall Palos Verdes Nature Preserve.

CONNECTION TO THREE SISTERS

3. Q – *There is a canyon connection between Three Sisters and Upper Filiorum along the chain link fence without “No Trespassing” sign that may be used for a trail. Where is the Preserve boundary line?*

R: The City is undertaking a survey of the property line. Upon completion of the survey, the City and the PVPLC will determine whether a connection can be made.

4. Q - Will there be an official trail connection made between Portuguese Bend and Three Sisters?

R: The City and the PVPLC intend to identify and pursue a connection between Three Sisters and Upper Filiorum. Currently, there is no funding available to create an appropriate and sustainable connection (i.e. footbridge or engineered trail work).

The PVPLC and the City will seek grant opportunities to provide funding for the connection.

5. Q – If a trail is not included in the current plan, is it likely that it will not ever be included. Consider indicating where a future route should be located.

R: The map will be updated to show a clouded area with future possible connections.

OTHER TRAIL ACCESSIBILITY

6. Q – The Matterhorn trail was a well used social trail for years and provides skill levell/enjoyment without maintenance. Blog comment: I like to hike really steep trails like the one that goes straight down from the houses (we assume this comment is referring to Matterhorn Trail). I know it's kind of messed up but why was it taken out? We need at least a few tough trails too. As far as who can go on the trails I don't see any problems. You never meet anyone there anyway.

R: The Matterhorn Trail is considered unsustainable in its current state due to its steep grade and high erosion potential. Improving this trail would require cutting several switchbacks into undisturbed habitat areas, which is not desired and in conflict with the Natural Communities Conservation Plan (NCCP). In its current state, the Matterhorn trail cuts through sensitive species habitat, such as CSS, gnatcatcher, and cactus wren and its use should be discontinued.

7. Q - Sustainability – The Cactus trail in Forrestal more steep than Matterhorn trail – with work by a trail expert it was restored and is currently in use (the comment is likely referring to the Flying Maine trail or Dauntless trail at Forrestal)

R: See response #6.

8. Q – Why was the Brim Trail (leading up to Jack's Hat) eliminated? It is an easier ride compared to the steeper Jack's Hat Trail and has great views of Vanderlip Canyon. It was said the trail was eliminated because the canyon below has a gnat catcher population. Was that decision based on a recent or older 2004 survey? Is it possible to keep the trail until a new survey is conducted? Is it feasible to reroute the trail to avoid gnat catcher encroachment (included link to website)? The Brim would also provide firefighters with a path to drag hose while fighting any fire from the canyon below.

R: Decisions to eliminate trails are based on a policy of reducing redundant trails and fragmentation to endangered species habitat. These are based on best available scientific

evidence. The presence of California gnatcatcher habitat and its historical presence in the area indicate that this is habitat that is available to the species, whether or not it is currently occupied.

Disturbance from trail usage increases the number of times a bird is flushed in a day, which decreases the amount of time to feed, which leads to decreased survival and increased risk of predation. Increased disturbance during the breeding season leads to decreased adult survival and increased nest failure. Trails may decrease many species' dispersal ability, and some species, particularly snakes, are sometimes killed or injured.

9. Q –Can you walk bikes on pedestrian/equestrian trails?

R: Yes. Bikes are allowed on “no bike” trails when they are walked.

10. Q – Why can't the trail off of Pacifica/McBride be widened as a fire road?

R: Now that the property is under City ownership and PVPLC management, the fire department will be consulted to determine proper fire access into the property. Then, if needed, appropriate actions will be taken to widen approved fire roads .

11. Q - Comment from P.B. community member that there is no legal bike access into Three Sisters (i.e. Gary's gulch)

R: The Portuguese Bend Homeowners Association has expressed concern regarding traffic through the community with the designation of Gary's Gulch Trail as multi-use. We therefore recommend the pedestrian/equestrian designation. The access point will be identified as leading to a private community on maps.

12. Q – Can erosion control devices at stream crossings be added?

R: The City and the PVPLC will continue to seek grant opportunities to fund these types of improvement projects. When funding becomes available, stream crossings will be assessed, prioritized, and improved when feasible.

13. Q – The City's conceptual trails plan designates trails as easy, intermediate and difficult. The Palos Verdes Loop Trail is included the City's Conceptual Trails Plan and includes connections that aren't being shown on the trails.

R: The City is updating its trails network plan and one component will include the Palos Verdes Loop Trail within the Preserve. The trails cannot traverse private property.

14. Q - There is an existing social trail that connects to Eucalyptus trail that doesn't connect to the Gulch trail.

R: Inclusion of this social trail will create too many duplicate trails in this area. Bicyclists have access to Eucalyptus trail by walking their bikes.

15. Q – Would it be possible for an overlook to be constructed off the Kelvin Canyon trail.

R: This comment has been noted and a possible overlook location will be identified on the final trails map.

16. Q - Residents of Portuguese Bend (Narcissi Rd.) have no cycling access to the trails, and hopefully something will be opened up for them. Why should horses and walkers have multiple access points and cyclists none at all?

R: See Comment #9, 11.

USER CONFLICT

17. Q - The Ranger representative attended the workshop and made the following comments:

- Trail conflicts are common in open space areas;
- Palos Verdes is ideal mountain bike terrain due to its topography;
- Will take more education to get all user groups to understand that the Preserve is not a free-for-all;
- It appears that there is a small core group of mountain bikers and other trail users that need better education; and,
- Trail users need to be patient with each other.

18. Q – There is a silent group of people on Peninsula not being represented who say that multi use = downhill biking and people are afraid to speak up due to ground rules (i.e. – don’t want confrontation)

R: The City and the PVPLC have designed these workshops to encourage public participation so that people come out and address their concerns. The workshops were advertised in the newspaper and posted on the City’s and PVPLC’s websites. Furthermore, a blog was provided; comments could be emailed to the City or the PVPLC; there was facilitation from NPS; and an open dialogue was encouraged. Care was made to consider all comments received. Other options were available for people who did not feel comfortable discussing issues at the public meeting, such as submitting written comments to the City or the PVPLC.

19. Q - How is user conflict mitigated along steep crossings?

R: The City has hired a ranger to enforce respectful trail use and trail signage. It is also the intent to put up signs to indicate proper trail behavior and exploring an educational opportunity through a “Share the Trail” workshop.

20. Q - I would like the draft map which includes some trails that are pedestrian/equestrian only.

- Support DFG’s comments to reduce trails for habitat protection
- Majority of group present at workshop are mountain bikers
- Please recognize that the majority voice is not necessarily the true majority
- Experienced personal user conflict

R: See Response to Comment #18 about reaching out to the user community.

21. Q - In small breakout groups it was hard to get share alternate views.

R: The City and the PVPLC may consider having at future workshops break-out groups designated as mountain biking, pedestrian and equestrian.

22. Q - “Assuming the risk mentality” of multi-use trails is an uncomfortable situation to preserve users.

R: This term was explored and was meant to assess one’s personal fitness before choosing a trail, and not to mean that you would be subject to risk by other trail users.

23. Q - Need yield signs such as in Santa Monica Mountains for multi-use trails. Multi-purpose is assumed risk. There is a risk to each sport.

R: The PVPLC and the City are in the process of conducting a wayfinding and signage inventory to determine what signs need to be removed, added or modified. A sign program for the overall Preserve will be included in the Public Use Master Plan (PUMP).

24. Q – Who is the authority regarding locating trails to avoid erosion?

R: Trail considerations provide the framework for the trail identification process. As a result, the current trail configurations are a result of historic social trail usage. If the PVPLC and the City consider a trail severely eroding, consideration would be given to close or reroute the trail.

25. Q - Consider using angle elevation on maps for discussion. Ex. Coastal Sage Scrub on slopes.

R: All trails were ground-truthed based on site visits conducted by the City and the PVPLC.

26. Q – A member of the bicyclist community commented that using land three times a month and rarely sees people using area. (i.e. low usage)

R: Now that the Upper Filiorum property is open for the public to enjoy, user frequency is expected to increase. Increased usage may also occur because of the connection with Three Sisters and Portuguese Bend.

27. Q - When courteous, folks talk to each other (different user groups) CORBA self polices and educates.

R: CORBA is encouraged to continue to self-police and educate.

28. Q -The term “user conflict” may not include trail encounters that do not result in a confrontation. Perhaps a better survey question, or additional one, ought to be “have you even been startled, scared, or hit?”

R: The PVPLC and the City have surveyed and ground-truthed the trails that are coded as multi-use to assure that line of sight and steepness will not impact pedestrian and equestrian users. Signage and enforcement will be set up to reduce the likelihood of the types of situations mentioned.

29. We've (bicyclists) spent years educating cyclists about trail etiquette, and the Park Rangers comments show it's paid off for us all. Trail segregation builds resentment, when the daunting volume of work needed in the Reserves demands cooperation. We have much in common: love of the outdoors, and support for conservation with our money and our volunteering. Let's work together.

R: The PVPLC and City strive to give all users their desired experience, which involves designating some trails with restricted use.

POSSUM/EUCALYPTUS TRAIL ACCESS

30. Q - Bikers do use Eucalyptus/Possum trail.

R: Bicyclists can continue to use this trail if designated for pedestrian/equestrian use by walking their bicycles.

31. Q - Data from previous PUMP survey shows that little user conflict exists. Biking group wants to continue to educate

R: This survey was done years ago. CORBA is encouraged to continue to educate.

32. Q - Multi-use trails are the only way to get to enjoy all trails

R: Everyone is allowed on pedestrian only trail. See response to Comment #9.

33. Q - Eucalyptus/Possum trail slow and a different experience which was excluded from Portuguese Bend and would like to keep this experience.

From multi-use family – important that all trails be multi-use (Possum/Euc trail).

Eucalyptus trail should be multi-use. Possum/Eucalyptus trail should be available for all.

R: See Response to Comment #9, 29.

34. Q - The rugged terrain makes it more difficult to avoid user conflicts. A potential solution is to eliminate steep trails and trails that offer technical challenge to bikes.

R: Steep trails are being reevaluated to see if they should have “walk bike” sections.

35. Q - It isn't fair to relegate those who seek a quiet experience to one little trail in U.F., especially since that type of experience was the PVPLC vision for initiating and facilitating the acquisition of the Preserve lands. I rarely hear others in positions of authority speak up for that Preserve experience which the large majority of Preserve users seek.

R: The City and the PVPLC have set aside trails for more quiet experience, particularly at Portuguese Bend Reserve. In most trail situations bicyclists do not unduly disturb the peace.

36. Q - Didn't hear a logical reason why Possum Trail is not designated multi-use. It would be unfair to discriminate against a specific user group (i.e. biker riders) based solely on the preference of another group.

R: See response to #9, 29.

37. I have been there at least a 100x's on a bike and I have never, ever encountered anyone else on the trail. It is a perfect, slow traveling, fun turning between the trees and easy resting spot and best of all, totally shaded. Line of sight is never a problem and I heard that mentioned by Malisa (NFS) at last meeting. I also could never imagine a horse going through there due to lower tree branches.

R: See response to #9, 29.

USER REPRESENTATION AT MEETING

38. **Q - Echo that bike community is very well organized and vocal, hikers not so multi-use tends to lead to a few bikers taking over unless strong controls. Bikers not compatible with other uses.**

R: See Response to Comment #18.

39. **Q - Bikers present at public meeting are the ones that will follow the rules.**

- **Bikers also enjoy the lands and natural features too (seems to be underlying assumption that bikers are only there to ride downhill)**
- **Bikers do self police**
- **Concept that bikers race/"bomb" downhill is incorrect.**

R: PVPLC and rangers have noted that there are violations of preserve rules by all user groups, including off-trail hikers and off-leash dogs, etc.

40. **Q - TRAIL USAGE: Needs to be a place for hikers and equestrians only.**

R: The draft plan identifies an area for hikers and equestrians only (Gary Gulch) that is designed to be comfortable and safe for all trail users.

41. **Q - The same people are continually represented at these public workshops.**

R: See response to Comment #18.

42. **I want to thank those involved in creating the new Filiorum trails plan workshop format. The inclusion of experienced National Park Service moderators, Department of Fish & Game representatives, and RPV park rangers has helped neutralize distorted habit protection claims and inflated user conflict assertions made to justify narrow views on trail use. It is imperative for us to use clear and measurable data to determine what trails will be kept and who will be allowed to use them. In the absence of specific justification we should keep all of the main social trails and designate them multiuse. In cases where concerns are expressed but lack specific details we should not make permanent changes until the appropriate evaluation is complete. Fact based decisions will result in a plan that both protects and enhances habitat while providing appropriate recreational opportunities for everyone.**

R: Decisions to maintain or remove trails have been made based on our commitment to provide recreational opportunities while managing for wildlife habitat. This includes reducing redundant trails, to reduce fragmentation within the reserves.

Decisions on usage are based on safety criteria, and care to provide enjoyable recreational opportunities for different user groups.