

APPLICATION

ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT AND MITIGATION PROGRAM

Mount Tamalpais State Park Coastal Trails Rehabilitation

PROJECT PROPOSAL

3. Environmental Project Summary

a. Project Scope

The purpose of this project is to enhance the visitor experience within Mt. Tamalpais State Park (MTSP) while also restoring two severely degraded and environmentally damaging backcountry dirt access roads (Coastal and Lone Tree Fire Roads). This project involves the removal of 3.1 miles of dirt road, conversion of 0.5 miles of road to multi-use trail, and construction of 4.8 miles of new multi-use trail. This project is part of a larger road and trail improvement effort within Mount Tamalpais State Park and adjacent public lands.

b. Location

MTSP is located in Marin County, 12 miles north of San Francisco. The Park consists of roughly 6,000 acres of mountainous terrain bordered by the Pacific Ocean to the west and by the community of Mill Valley to the east. The project site affords one of the greatest views in the park and adjacent public lands. On any of the many clear days throughout the year, visitors can stand at the adjoining trailhead of Coastal and Lone Tree Fire Roads at approximately 1,100 ft elevation, and look over the rolling hillsides of perennial grasses and coastal scrub and take in unobstructed views of the City of San Francisco, the East Bay and the expanse of the Pacific Ocean less than two miles to the west. Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) borders MTSP on the western and southern margins while Muir Woods National Monument is surrounded by MTSP. Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD) lands lie to the north. Both fire roads terminate on Highway 1 in between the communities of Muir Beach and Stinson Beach. Panoramic Highway is found less than a quarter of a mile from the trailheads of these two roads.

c. Purpose

The MTSP trail system is similar to the trail networks on surrounding public lands in that it consists of an assortment of old ranch roads and more narrowly constructed meandering pathways. The fifty-eight mile trail system of MTSP provides recreational opportunities for hikers, runners, cyclists, equestrians, and other passive recreationists. It is commonly recognized that trail users prefer the more narrowly constructed trails to the wide ranch roads. The ranch roads are generally in poor condition, and are visual scars on the natural landscape. More narrow pathways are needed. The conversion of Lone Tree and Coastal Fire

Roads to more narrowly constructed pathways will increase the opportunity for users to have a more aesthetically pleasing, safer and environmentally friendly, multi-use trail experience. The restoration and conversion to trail of Lone Tree Fire Road will diminish the safety hazards of the route (eliminate excessive slopes, blind turns, degraded road surface) and improve the environmental quality of the area by eliminating or greatly reducing sources of erosion.

This project will also provide an educational component. The area has a long history, dating back to the 1880's, of recreation via essentially the same hiking trails that exist today. New interpretive

displays (currently none exist at the site) placed at the trailhead/junction of the Coastal Fire Road, Deer Park Fire Road and the Dipsea Trail/Lone Tree Road, a few tenths of a mile from the Pantoll Ranger Station and the hub of activity in the park, will offer visitors the opportunity to gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the significance of this portion of the Mount Tamalpais trail system.

d. Amount of Request

The amount requested for the proposed project is \$246,000. These funds will be matched with \$160,000 of Department of Parks and Recreation funds. The total project cost will be \$406,000.

4. Agency Eligibility

Authority

As a State agency, California State Parks is eligible to receive grants from the EEMP. Acceptance of funds from the Transportation Commission is consistent with the Department's authority under Public Resources Code Section 5005.

5. Related Transportation Project

This restoration and trail improvement project is eligible for EEMP funding since it is indirectly related to the environmental impact of modifying an existing transportation facility. The project was the repair of an 800 foot long section of State Route 1, PM 9.2, between Muir Beach and Stinson Beach in Marin County that was destroyed by a local landslide and closed, due to safety hazards, in January of 1990 until safe traffic access could be restored. Repair work included movement of the surrounding hillside and relocation of Hwy One 250 feet inland, behind the landslide. This segment of the highway was closed for 18 months, until June 1991 when repairs were completed. Approximately 1 million cubic yards of soil were moved down slope of the highway and another approximately 200,000 cubic yards were placed into the adjacent ocean waters to create a compact earthen platform to stabilize the slide. Twenty-eight acres of Mount Tamalpais State Park land were directly impacted in the repair work. The repair work occurred within a quarter mile to a mile of the proposed project site. Access to this portion of the park via Hwy 1 was stymied for a period of a year and a half.

Mitigation for the project included several projects in coastal Marin County, including, but not limited to, the clean-up of a 2.5 acre hazardous waste dump site in Bolinas Lagoon, a few miles north west of the slide, and 5 years of monitoring at the site. Additional mitigation included a 3.8 million dollar donation to Golden Gate National Recreation Area to purchase the Giacomini property on Tomales Bay. Another mitigation measure included five years of monitoring at the foot of the slide for direct impacts to marine life. The transportation project lead agency statement is attached.

The proposed work on Lone Tree and Coastal Fire Roads will enhance the mitigation measures taken as a result of the slide. As an eligible designated scenic highway, this section of Highway One in Marin County attracts a large volume of people from all over the world each year. Lone Tree and Coastal Fire Roads are both accessible and visible from Highway One. With the safety improvements made to the highway as a result of the slide repair work, visitors can now safely park their vehicles along the roadside and access the trails. The improvements to the trails, through this project, will greatly enhance the recreational and aesthetic experience of the visitors by providing safer access and less visual degradation of the natural environment than the current roads.

6. General Criteria

a. Increased Mitigation and Enhancement

The mitigation undertaken as a result of the Lone Tree Slide repair focused on the restoration and monitoring of marine and wetland habitat and reopening access for travelers on Hwy 1. The proposed project will enhance the existing mitigation in a number of ways, by improving upland habitat value, reducing sediment transport to waterways, and improving recreational access, safety and overall experience for park visitors.

Repair work on Highway 1 improved vehicular access and safety of travelers to a highly traveled segment of roadway. Along this improved segment of road, pullouts and widened shoulders allow for tourists to stop and take in the view, consult a map, explore nearby trailheads safely. Widened shoulders allow for safer travel of bicyclists and the vehicles passing along side of them. The improvement of multi-use trails connecting to this new portion of roadway will compliment the highway repair work.

The visual quality of the new trails will also be an improvement over the existing dirt roads where, in several places, they run perpendicular to the natural contours of the land. As they currently stand, the roads are an unnatural break in the landscape. With much bare soil exposed to the elements and human influences the habitat value of the area is diminished. Poor drainage is another concern as it leads to loss of soil and, more so in other roads in the park, contributes sediment to waterways, increasing stream turbidity and degrading spawning habitat which has proven harmful to the long term viability of fish and other aquatic species. The best repair solution is to convert these degraded roads to trail, and along the most degraded and poorly aligned segments, construct replacement trail realignments with a much softer footprint. These will follow the natural curvilinear topography of the land and therefore be much less visibly obtrusive. Mitigation measures associated with the related transportation project focused on improvement of marine habitat. The repair project itself focused on the stabilization of a huge amount of soil, an entire hillside. With the proposed recontouring and road to trail conversion on Lone Tree and Coastal Fire Roads, substantial recovery and restoration of native vegetation will take place to the benefit of wildlife, water and soil resources and the park's aesthetics.

With the proposed project, State Parks has the opportunity to improve trail corridors that currently have a negative visual effect in the park landscape as well as an undesirable effect on the natural resources of MTSP. The roads have been in poor condition for several decades, with the roadbeds entrenched between six and 12 inches in many locations.

b. Statewide Project Goals and Local Cash Contributions

MTSP is a destination park for many of its users. Visitation occurs from different regions, states, and foreign countries. Substantial local neighborhood park use also occurs from small communities such as Mill Valley, Stinson Beach as well as the greater Bay Area. During 2001, visitor attendance reached an estimated 1.6 million people in MTSP. Muir Woods National Monument attendance was estimated at 825,000 during FY 01. The surrounding Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) was a destination for another 13.4 million people.

The proximity of MTSP to the population of the Bay Area, with its estimated 6.8 million people and rich cultural and ethnic diversity, gives this park especially important status within the California State Park System. Though many of the visitors to the park experience it by car, the project site is adjacent to the Pantoll Ranger Station, the hub of visitor activity in the park, with a visitor information center, campground, parking area and dozens of trailheads. The Coastal Fire Road is a highly visible part of the existing trail system, as is Lone Tree, but to a lesser extent.

It is anticipated that the new trails will attract greater visitation as park users seek more aesthetically pleasing pathways that provide the intimate experience of meandering through the

countryside, following the natural contours of the hills, while taking in the world class views of the San Francisco Bay Area.

Statewide Resource Priorities

This project is consistent with all local and state plans. It is consistent with the California Department of Parks and Recreation Mission Statement and The State Park Resource Management Directives, which provide Resource Management Policies for all units of the State Park System. The 1984 Marin Countywide Trails Plan includes the Lone Tree and Coastal Fire Roads in its preservation goals as multi-use trails. Road to trail conversion along these roads will replace existing, degraded trail corridors. The Marin Countywide Trails Plan is currently being updated as part of the Marin County General Plan. The proposed project is compatible with and promotes the policies identified in the Mount Tamalpais State Park General Plan, 1980 and is consistent with the Marin County Local Coastal Program-Unit 1 (April, 1980). The project enhances an existing high quality recreational experience while preserving essential park natural resources. Those resources include soil, water quality, vegetation and wildlife.

This project involves several of the recognized examples involved in the "Resourceful California" policy. They include Habitat Conservation, Recreational Access and State Park Stewardship.

Local Cash Contributions

A limited amount of watershed management planning has occurred to date, and watershed and trail restoration grant applications have been recently filed. This work has been a necessary element to future trail planning at MTSP. The primary objectives in the development of watershed planning have been focused on the reduction of environmental damage caused by the degraded access roads and trails within the park while providing essential enhancement of multi-use recreational opportunities. To balance these needs, traditional watershed analysis has been conducted which:

- a. Identifies road-related and upland sediment sources most likely to impact fish-bearing streams,
- b. Develops prioritized implementation phases to reduce road and trail-related sedimentation,
- c. Evaluates park trail requirements with the long-term objective of greatly reducing the number of roads and trails within the park while accommodating all of the visitors.

MTSP was a partner recipient of DFG S.B. 271 Program funding in 1999. A watershed-wide assessment of the contributions of road and trail related sediment to the local creeks was conducted with the grant monies. The proposed project becomes a portion of a larger effort where essential watershed degradation issues will be identified and remediated. An implementation grant application has also been recently filed under the S.B. 271 program for several roads within the State Park. A request for just under \$200,000 was made to complete many road feature repairs that, once corrected, will contribute to the longevity of the roads and trail system and the health of the many water courses in the area.

The management of MTSP satisfies the watershed-based management goals of maintaining long term, local control of watershed planning and enhancement, conserving and improving the natural resources of the watershed, encouraging responsible land stewardship practices that support a healthy watershed, managing streams to maximize wildlife habitat, and education of the community. This project addresses all of these watershed-based goals.

c. Project Readiness

Implementation of grant funding will occur immediately after receiving authority to start work. The process of environmental documentation is underway. A negative declaration for the project is written and will be filed shortly after the public meeting for the project which will be held early November. Consultation with US Fish and Wildlife Service has been made to identify any possible impacts to wildlife. Matching funds for this project are available for expenditure currently. Planning and implementation of trail construction and road removal work can be completed within a one year time frame.

The project manager has extensive restoration contracting experience that enables this project to move forward on time and within proposed budgets. Skilled contract labor and equipment operators can be secured within tight timelines. The primary related transportation project under EEM was completed in June of 1991.

Project Category Criteria- Roadside Recreational

a. Need For The Project

MTSP is a unit of the California State Park System, and as such, falls under State Park Stewardship.

1. Impact of transportation facility on current or potential recreational opportunities.

The area of Highway One which received repairs for the Lone Tree Slide is an integral part to the movement of the visitor population to the different areas of the 6,300 acre Mount Tamalpais State Park. Improvements to this road were necessary in order to provide safe access for the several thousand people that utilize the trail system, of which Lone Tree and Coastal Fire Road are a part, and the larger number of visitors that explore the park by personal vehicle.

MTSP is a destination park for many of its users. Visitation occurs from different regions, states, and foreign countries. Substantial local neighborhood park use also occurs from small communities such as Mill Valley, Stinson Beach as well as the greater Bay Area. A majority of the park users arrive at the park by car. Improvements to Highway One included construction of a safer more sustainable route of travel for park visitors. Access was prohibited during 18 months of construction, however once completed, availability of pullouts, and access to trails was improved. Being that the terminus of these trails is on Highway One, the location of the proposed Coastal Trail in particular is a highly visible part of the existing trail system. Pantoll Ranger Station, the hub of activity of the park with it's large parking lot, numerous trailheads, visitor information center and campground, is within minutes of the project site and is reachable by taking Highway One to Panoramic Highway. The only other way to reach Pantoll is via a winding series of Mill Valley's residential streets which eventually outlet onto Panoramic Highway and leads to the ranger station.

Access to areas of MTSP such as the Frank Valley Horse Camp and nearby hiking and equestrian trails will be provided by the project. Visitors will be able to reach the improved trail routes by taking Golden Gate Transit (GGT), the local bus service, as an alternative to private car. This service provides a stop at Pantoll Ranger Station (among other stops adjacent to the park) on weekends and holidays. A new two-year pilot program of GGT began this summer that offers shuttle service Monday through Friday, with four round trips per day, to several locations in West Marin. The drop-off points include Muir Beach and Stinson Beach communities found along Highway One. The project area lies right in the center of these two stops, less than a mile from

each to the north and to the south. The twelve passenger shuttle buses are wheelchair accessible and provide bicycle racks, promoting use by diverse populations.

2. Why should this project be funded?

The current Coastal and Lone Tree Fire Roads are in a severely degraded condition. This detracts from the visitor experience in this prominent Bay Area California State Park. Once completed, this project will increase visitation through improved access, and will enhance the scenic qualities of the park.

Road to trail conversion of the Lone Tree and Coastal Fire Roads will provide continued access for the same recreational user groups that the roads currently serve (hikers, runners, cyclists and equestrians). However, the new trails will better suit the abilities of these visitors. These trails will provide for safer travel for all user groups by eliminating gullies and excessively steep slopes, as well as dangerous "blind spots" created by severe running grades and tight turns found on the current road alignment.

This project will enhance the quality of an existing trail system. The new coastal trails will continue to provide access from Hwy 1 to the west and Panoramic Hwy to the north. Trail connections to other open space areas will be maintained, specifically to GGNRA. The communities of Stinson Beach just to the north on Hwy 1 and Muir Beach to the south are very reachable from the project site. The city of Mill Valley lies on the eastern border of the State Park. Many cyclists use MTSP to connect their travels through Mill Valley and the surrounding county and state roadways. Currently the multi-use trail system within MTSP is very limited and involves short distance travel only. Construction of this project provides important links to city, county and state roadways that lead to other recreational use areas and the surrounding communities mentioned above.

MTSP has yet to realize its full recreational potential. It is widely recognized as a landmark throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. MTSP is visible from other high peaks within the greater Bay Area as well. For example, it is showcased from Bald Mountain within Sugarloaf Ridge State Park, located approximately 50 miles north of the project location. To the east, the peak of Mount Diablo can be viewed across the San Francisco Bay and beyond.

This project has additional environmental benefits that augment the natural character of Mount Tamalpais State Park, but also increase its recreational use. Park visitors find degraded backcountry access roads unsafe and unattractive. Experience gained by State Park staff during the implementation of similar projects located within Annadel State Park, demonstrate that visitation of all user groups is greatly increased when safer less degraded trail corridors are provided. Road to trail conversion work accomplished in 1998, 2000 and 2001 in Annadel demonstrate that both visitation is increased while visitor accidents are reduced. The new coastal trails will eliminate hazardous obstacles and blind corners, improving the current access.

3. Is there a deficiency of similar opportunities?

The new trails will provide access for multiple user groups: hikers, runners, equestrians, and cyclists as well as other passive recreationists. The new trails will be a great improvement over the existing degraded roads, providing safer and more accessible avenues to explore the park. The northern trailhead will be a short distance from the Pantoll Ranger Station, situated just off of Panoramic Highway. Here visitors can learn more about the park at the visitor information kiosk, join in on an interpretive walk through the park by taking any one of the many trailheads that fan out in all directions from the Pantoll area, or spend a night in the campground. Their terminus'

will be located just off of a highly traveled section of Highway One, minutes away from Stinson Beach. Locals from the area and visitors from around the world travel this route to take in the sweeping vistas of the rugged coastline and the Pacific Ocean, all within less than an hour drive to the metropolis of San Francisco.

4. Who will be served by this project, and what is the estimated visitor use?

This project serves all of the visitors to MTSP. Currently, there is a lack of multi-use trails within the park. Mountain bikes and equestrians are generally limited to degraded backcountry dirt access roads for their recreational enjoyment. This project will provide a more diverse, enhanced visitor trail experience.

During 2001, visitor attendance reached an estimated 1.6 million people in Mount Tamalpais State Park. Muir Woods National Monument attendance was estimated at 825,000 during FY 01. The surrounding GGNRA was a destination for another 13.4 million people. This state park receives very high use and is visited by one of the most diverse populations in the state.

5. Does the project connect to or complement other recreation areas or facilities?

The project is located solely within MTSP. However, the proposed trails begin less than one quarter mile from the boundary of Muir Woods National Monument (MWNM). The monument has additional trail connections, predominantly for hikers, but also for mountain bikes and equestrians. The Coastal Fire Road terminates at GGNRA land but from there, connections are easily available to Highway 1 and Muir Beach. From the bottom of the new Coastal Trail, equestrians can take the Heather Cutoff Trail to the Frank Valley Equestrian Area or Group Horse Camp one half mile to the east. The new Lone Tree Trail will provide access to the popular Rocky Point area of the park that contains a public campground and cabins overlooking the Pacific. Stinson Beach is located one mile to the north.

Many different loops and connections are available from the proposed trails. The routes are an important link in the 58-mile trail system found on State Park lands. Adjacent open space managed by MMWD, GGNRA, and MWNM provide many additional miles of trails for visitors to the area to explore.

The Muir Beach and Stinson Beach communities, located along Highway One, are within minutes of the project site. Stinson Beach receives an influx of tourists on weekends year round and weekdays during the summer season. The proposed trails will be visible and accessible to anyone traveling on Highway 1. MTSP is literally the backyard of the 14,000 residents of Mill Valley with another estimated 6.8 million people living nearby in the Bay Area. Local use of the park is quite high. International visitor attendance is substantial at MWNM. These individuals will also be attracted to the project site area.

6. Are there any barriers to access?

The project location is optimal for visitor access, with the MTSP headquarters located a few tenths of a mile from the trailhead. This site provides ample parking, along with interpretive facilities, a campground and access to many other trails that lead to other areas of the park. Visitors with disabilities have access to parking, kiosk, restrooms and campground. The western (Lone Tree) and southern (Coastal) trailheads are located along Highway 1, on GGNRA land where parking is provided by wide pullouts along the highway, and trailhead signs are located to encourage diversified park visitors to explore the available trails. Other GGNRA trails are available to the immediate west of the new Coastal Trail. Muir Beach, a popular day use/beach area, is just south of the trail terminus.

Road to trail conversion of the two fire roads, considering their current degraded condition, eliminates substantial safety problems. Steep slopes far exceed limits for safe travel, and encourage excessive mountain bike speed. This combined with the current road alignments along their severe up and down terrain has created deep gullies, washboard surfaces and blind turns. These elements make the roads a serious safety hazard.

b. Sustainability

State Parks has made a commitment to provide high quality recreational experiences for a variety of recreation users of all levels and abilities. This policy is reflected in this project. The expertise of State Park trail specialists (Don Beers of the North Coast Redwoods District and Marla Hastings and trail staff of the Silverado District) has been, and will continue to be, incorporated into all stages of the proposed project. Hundreds of miles of roads and trails have been removed, converted and maintained across the state to promote the highest recreational and environmental standards that can be achieved. Road removal and road to trail conversion projects completed in Sonoma County, just to the north, have been an incredible success demonstrated by increased and diversified park use and few safety incidents.

The proposed MTSP project will be very sustainable. This project will eliminate the on-going but ineffective maintenance of the existing poorly constructed fire roads. The new properly designed and constructed trails will require only affordable and routine maintenance for years to come.

c. Other Benefits and Community Participation

The scenic and natural resources values of the project location are extraordinary. The diverse plant communities present which include forest, shrubland and grassland with the open ocean, the City of San Francisco and the entire San Francisco Bay as a backdrop, create an aesthetic appeal that is unsurpassed. All of the plant communities are of the highest quality with little past human disturbance aside from the fire roads to be treated. The native perennial grassland sites are especially significant and are recognized as being among the most important in the state. The topography is also dramatic with deep forested or shrub covered canyons, open, grassy ridgelines and the peak of Mt. Tamalpais present as a major dramatic backdrop.

This project is widely supported by visitors and trail groups of all kinds. Among our supporters are the following organized groups and agencies: Marin County Open Space District, Marin County Fire Department, Marin Municipal Water District, Sonoma County Trails Council, Access 4 Bikes, Bay Area Ridge Trail, Bicycle Trails Council and International Mountain Bike Association. Letters of support are attached from a number of these groups. This project is widely accepted as an important breakthrough for multi-use trail access. Prior to this project, few multi-use trail opportunities have been available apart from degraded fire roads with low aesthetic appeal.

Interpretive displays will be designed and installed at the trailhead/junction to educate trail users of the significance of the trails they are traveling, many of which have been around since the late 1800's and have hosted the earliest of trail users. The rich recreational heritage of the mountain has been under-interpreted to date. A complete history has not been documented. Pieces of the park's history are being revealed as a result of this project. New signs will make this information readily available to the public.

The project site is located along a section of Highway One in Marin County that is designated as an eligible part of the California Scenic Highway System. According to CalTrans' 2001 traffic counts, during peak months, average daily traffic reached 4,650 vehicles at the Highway 1 and Panoramic Highway North intersection, just north of the project site (<http://www.dot.ca.gov>).