

County Trails Program Framework

Direction for Developing the County Trails Program

To meet the challenges of developing a new County Trails Program, the Board of Supervisors had to balance the overall needs for a successful trails system and specific issues relating to the program's management and implementation. In order to move forward with a new County Trails Program, three major components were identified.

3.1 Major Program Components

Board of Supervisors Affirmation

The **first component** of developing a County Trails Program involved documentation of the Board of Supervisor's findings concerning the importance of providing public trails as a legitimate function of County government. On

September 13, 2000, the Board of Supervisors affirmed that:

“Riding and hiking trails outside of County parkland and County road rights-of-way are a legitimate and necessary form of public recreation that the County should provide”.

This basic affirmation provided the foundation for developing a quality trails system. It also indicated that it is appropriate to identify and consider the commitment of resources for development and management of a new County Trails Program.

A Trails Program Management Team (TPMT), which combined resources from the Departments of Parks and Recreation, Planning and Land Use, and Public Works, was charged with developing a County Trails Program.

The team identified long-term programmatic changes, and other improvements needed to meet the vision of developing trails that satisfy the expectations of all San Diego County communities. The plan was to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the current trails program and information necessary to adequately address issues of need, costs, funding, management, and implementation. It would identify opportunities to maximize trails within habitat management and conservation programs, open space preserves, and parks. It would also consider ways to implement a “bottom-up”, community driven approach to County trails and pathways, and provide analysis of options for implementation and long-term trails management.

In July 2000, the Board of Supervisors adopted a defense and indemnification ordinance (County Code Section 812.101) to address property owner concerns about liability and encourage voluntary trails dedications. Support for the plan was also reflected in subsequent Board of Supervisors actions that help to secure continued public access to trails on public lands (RS 2477).

Trail System Assessment

The *second component* was completion of a Countywide Trail System Assessment (TSA). The TSA was completed in July 2001 and covered five major topics:

- *Opportunities and Constraints Analysis*

- *Public Needs Assessment*
- *Financial Considerations*
- *Trails Program Options*
- *Final Trails Program Model*

As a result of the information compiled in the TSA, it was possible to evaluate existing trails and new opportunities associated with public lands, public rights-of-way, and lands within habitat management and conservation programs, open space preserves, and parks. Land uses and issues associated with impacts to private property, agriculture, environmental resources, and voluntary and required easement dedications were also considered.

Trail Goals and Policies

The *third component* of the County Trails Program involved the adoption of new goals and policies for trails. The Board of Supervisors adopted the Countywide Goals and Policies applicable to both regional and community trails in January 2002. These goals and policies are an integral part of the County Trails Program. They are contained in the Public Facilities Element of the General Plan as well as presented here in the CTMP Goals and Policies Section.

The *last component* of the County Trails Program involves development of a programmatic implementation plan. This plan will identify internal structure management within the County as well as

trail costs, staffing and funding. This plan, developed as a separate effort by the Department of Parks and Recreation, will apply to both regional and community trails.

3.2 Trail Program Structure

In July 2001, the Board of Supervisors established the basis of the County Trails Program by considering options and recommendations outlined in the TSA. The County Trails Program (CTP) reorganized both the existing plan and management structure concerning public trails. This new structure was necessary to efficiently meet the Board selected trails system concept, program implementation, and management structure models, the approved goals and policies, and to minimize any potential conflicts with private property, increase community involvement, provide flexibility, and to ensure an appropriate level of County government support.

The three major program structure recommendations are as follows:

Trails System Concept

The Board of Supervisors selected a trails system concept involving the placement of trails on both public and private land as well as public road rights-of-way. This option was viewed as providing the highest level of service and the most probability of meeting public, community, and regional expectations.

Implementation Model

The Board also decided on a recommended implementation model, which separated regional trails from community trails and addressed their placement relative to the General Plan (GP). The Regional Trails Map is contained within the GP to enable the County to secure funding and interagency cooperative agreements for regional trails connections. The Community Trails Master Plan (CTMP) was developed outside of the GP, but as an adjunct to it, thus allowing greater flexibility in creating and amending community trails plans and guidelines without the necessity of amending the GP.

Management Structure

The last major consideration by the Board as outlined in the TSA involved the development of the model for management structure for this trails program. The recommended management structure includes maximizing the collective experience and expertise from three County departments: Parks and Recreation, Planning and Land Use, and Public Works which are needed to capitalize on core competencies of each department and manage all aspects of this new County Trails Program.

The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) will act as the lead agency coordinating safety and enforcement standards for the countywide trails system. Jurisdictions may choose to contribute

police or park rangers to patrol trails in their jurisdiction. Communities and trails organizations may develop, in partnership with DPR, volunteer trail patrols.

3.3 General Plan Model

Countywide Goal 2:

Initiate and sustain an effective and efficient trail system, using the Regional Trails Map contained within this General Plan and a Community Trails Master Plan as the basis for future planning, coordination, implementation, and management of the trails system.

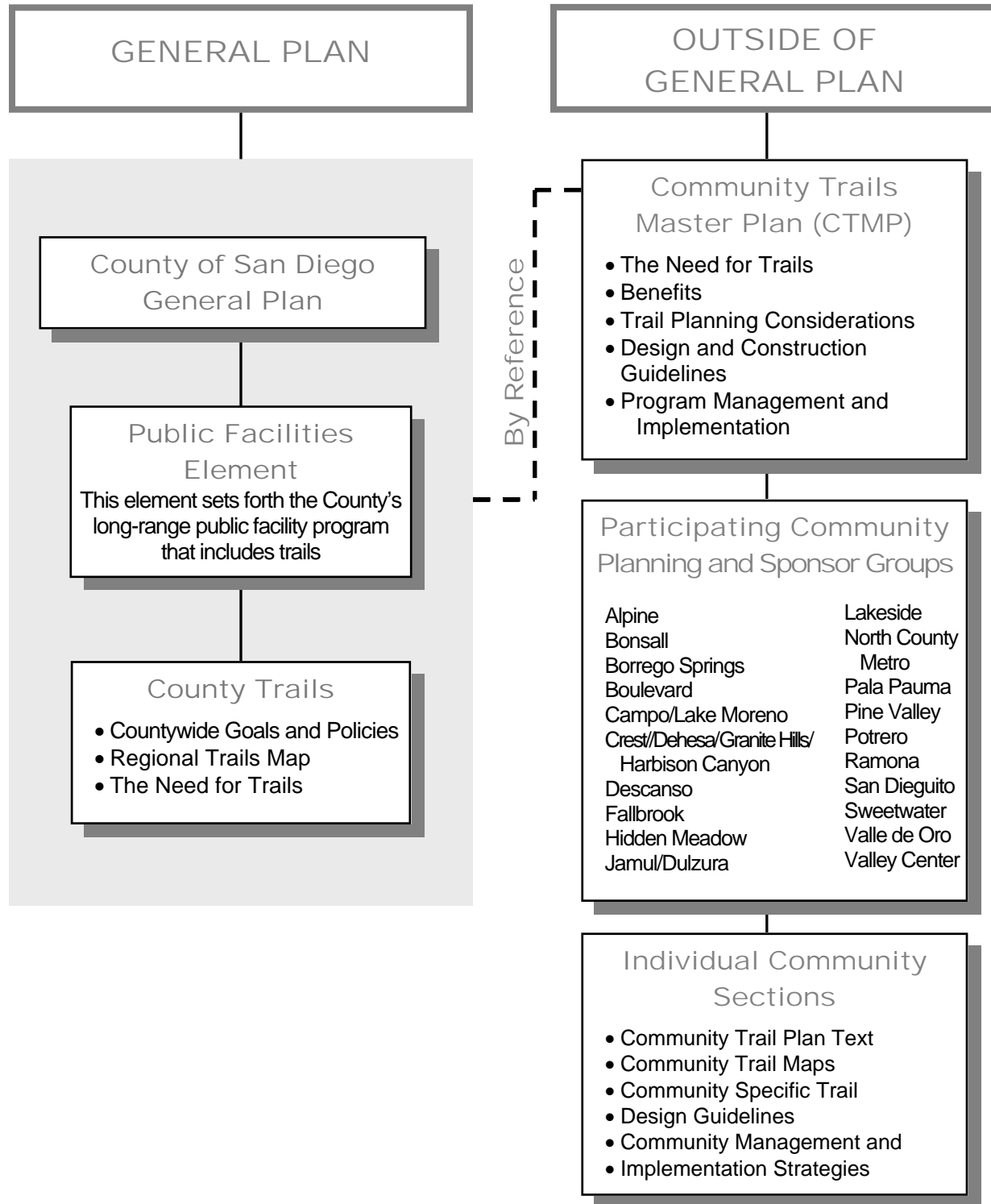
The General Plan model outlines the structure of the CTP within the General Plan process (**Exhibit CTP-1**). The Public Facilities Element of the General Plan describes the CTP and is the primary element containing trails information. Focused aspects of trails planning may also be included in other GP elements such as Circulation and Open Space/Conservation. The Public Facilities Element incorporates a Regional Trails Map, the need for trails and Countywide Goals and Policies related to trails. The Regional Trails Map includes a regional trails map. The RTP is contained within the Public Facilities element of the General Plan because of the significance of regional trails on a countywide, state, or national level.

The Community Trails Master Plan includes individual community trails maps, design and management guidelines, and community specific goals, policies and implementation strategies. The CTMP was specifically tailored to be separate from the General Plan. The goal was a flexible, user-friendly document, which did not require a General Plan amendment to be updated yet provided a sound foundation for trails planning and good legal basis for nexus and proportionality issues on discretionary projects.



Pine Valley

Exhibit CTP-1: General Plan Model



3.4 Overview of the Public Facilities Element

An important element of the County of San Diego's General Plan, the Public Facilities Element, sets forth the County's long-range public facility program. The objective is to ensure a strong linkage between public facility planning and land use planning. With the high rate of population increases projected for the region, it is imperative that public facilities are available to serve both the existing and new populations and that public facility planning remains an integral part of the land use decision-making process.

Without public infrastructure systems, our society would be unable to function. The County's extensive system of roads and thoroughfares allows for the transport of goods and people and affects the economic vitality of the region. Fire stations, animal control shelters, sheriff stations, courts, jails, water lines, flood control improvements, solid waste disposal sites and wastewater treatment ensure the protection and safety of the public. Schools ensure that our society will continue to educate the next generation. Quality of life, health, and welfare of County residents are furthered by parks and recreation facilities that include a countywide, inter-connecting regional and community trails system. Also included are senior centers, childcare centers, libraries, health facilities, and social services facilities.

These public facilities are provided by a wide variety of public and private entities, including the County, special districts, joint powers agencies, regional authorities and private individuals and organizations. The network of public facilities provides the backbone of the County's economy, safety, and quality of life.

Public Facilities Needs

The aim of the Public Facilities Element is to ensure that the facilities needs of the County's communities are adequately considered in all County actions, and to encourage a regional approach to public facility planning and funding.