

SECTION  
10

## Regional Trails Plan

### *Connecting Communities Regionally*

The County fulfills a dual role as both a provider of local services to the unincorporated area, and as the provider of regional services to the entire County. The trails program addresses regional trail facilities that affect areas not within the County's land use jurisdiction. For these regional trails, many policies involve coordination and cooperation with the regions cities on trail planning, siting and funding.

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***Countywide Policy 2.3:***

*Participate in completing missing segments of regional trails to satisfy the need for long-range trail opportunities.*

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Regional trails are significant on a countywide, state or national level. The Regional Trails Map was included in the Public Facilities Element of the General Plan because of its importance to the County and to the region as a

whole. It provides the necessary mandate that these trails are important, desirable, provide a public benefit, serve as the backbone for a larger trail network, provide connectivity to existing trails, and provide an overall significant regional resource worthy of consideration for various forms of future funding.

The Regional Trails Map identifies approved general alignment corridors of regional trails in the County. These trails have characteristics and conditions that serve a regional function by covering long linear distances, transcending community and/or municipal borders, having state or national significance, or providing important connections to existing parks and open space preserves. Many of these trails are fairly well established and/or are in the later stages of planning and implementation.

Modification of major regional trails or new regional trails can be incorporated through the General Plan amendment process. When proposed, modifications to the General Plan text should consider the status of regional and long-term community needs and goals, environmental constraints, and potential impacts on adjacent lands.

In implementing the regional trail system, it is anticipated that a significant number of trails or trail segments would occur on public lands, thereby limiting those on private lands. The majority of regional trails are shared public facilities with multi-jurisdictional authority.

### Regional Trail Design Guidelines

The Community Trails Master Plan, Design and Construction Guidelines Section, is the primary document for new trail development. These guidelines provide design criteria that are applicable to the Regional Trails Plan as well as community trails. Because regional trails and related facilities will be provided by the County and other agencies throughout the unincorporated area, and in some cases throughout the region, policies and guidelines addressing their design and construction are broad to allow the flexibility necessary to determine the most appropriate way to provide the trail connection or facility. These guidelines are intended to provide direction to developers and other jurisdictions as to the County's preference for trail construction and to help minimize future maintenance, operation issues, user conflicts, and impacts to cultural

and natural resources. If site conditions prohibit, or otherwise prevent general conformance with the Countywide Trail Design Guidelines, it will not prohibit or prevent the development of the trail if approved by the County Trail Manager.

All regional trail segments should have design guidelines established for tread width, easement width, function, cross slope, grade, anticipated user volume, horizontal clearance, and vertical clearance as well as adequate signage, fencing, staging areas and additional trail features. Sight distance, views and the overall visual quality of the surrounding environment are important to the human experience and the more practical applications of safety and environmental protection. When siting new trails, it is preferable, under most circumstances, to utilize existing forest (dirt) roads, utility access roads/easements or existing (unauthorized) trails.

The RTP includes nine trails that provide significant north-south and east-west trail corridors that cross through the County of San Diego (**Figure RTP-1**) as follows:

- California Coastal Trail
- California Riding and Hiking Trail
- Coast to Crest Trail (San Dieguito River Park Trail)
- Juan Bautista De Anza Trail
- Otay Valley Regional Park Trail

- Pacific Crest Trail
- San Diego River Park Regional Trail
- Sweetwater River and Loop Trail

- Trans-County Trail

Additional existing trail segments and proposed reroutes for portions of some of the regional trails are also identified on the Regional Trails Map.

Figure RTP-1: Regional Trails Map



## California Coastal Trail

The California Coastal Trail (CCT) is the result of a vision and is a work-in-progress with the goal of providing public trail access to and along California's 1,100-mile long coast.

In 1975 the California Coastal Plan, Policy 145, specifically called for the establishment of a Coastal Trail System:

*“A hiking, bicycle, and equestrian trails system shall be established along or near the coast... . Ideally, the trails system should be continuous and located near the shoreline, but it may be necessary for some trail segments to be away from the oceanfront area to meet the objective of a continuous system.”*

When complete, the California Coastal Trail will be a continuous trail system linking the Oregon border to the Mexican border through wild, rural and urban landscapes closely paralleling the shoreline.

In 2000, the trail was recognized as a statewide and national resource. Governor Gray Davis and the White House Millennium Council officially recognized the trail and it is now designated as California's Millennium Legacy Trail; the California Legislature has recognized it as a statewide trail. In 2001, the Senate passed legislation, SB908, that directed the State

Coastal Conservancy, aided by other State agencies, to determine what was needed to complete the CCT.



The vision is for a continuous system that connects parks, beaches, bicycle routes, hostels, and to other state and local trails networks. Currently, about 65% of the California Coastal Trail is complete. Two counties, San Francisco and Del Norte, can boast of having successfully completed a continuous hiking trail from border to border. San Diego County has 76 miles of the coastal trail and 69% is complete with major gaps consisting of 20 miles in North County and 9 miles at San Diego Bay.

## California Riding and Hiking Trail

In 1944, through the interest of many individuals, a California Riding and Hiking Trails Project Committee was established to initiate development of a statewide trail system. The 1945 Legislature approved the California Riding and Hiking Trail Act that was signed by then Governor Earl Warren. The plan called for a 3,000 mile trail, extending from San Diego County near the Mexican Border, north through the Tehachapi Mts. and Sierra Nevada to the Oregon Border and returning southward through the Coast Range. It was to pass through 37 of the 52 counties in the state.

As much as possible, the route was established over pre-existing forest service trails and dirt roads on public lands. By 1962 a total of 1,060 miles of trail had been completed. More of the trail was completed after the 1968 Congressional dedication of the Pacific Crest National Trail which utilized much of the same alignment. In many areas, portions of the trail have been incorporated into local and regional systems.

Although the vision of a continuous trail through the state has never been completed, San Diego County, however, has the most continuous miles of the trail via trail easements, encroachment permits, and license agreements traversing private property, semi-public lands and public land.



*Trail Marker along the Sequan Truck Trail, Alpine*

Since 1983, San Diego County Trails Council, a non-profit organization, took on the responsibility to manage and restore approximately 100 miles of the California Riding and Hiking Trail (CRHT) from Otay Lakes to Cuyamaca Rancho State Park. While many sections were restored and reopened with the assistance from a State Grant, there still remains a substantial amount of restoration and rerouting. As development encroached into the south and eastern portions of the County, segments of the trail were built upon and forest service roads were paved over. These sections of the trail were then delegated to the public road rights of way.

The CRHT represents the best opportunity to connect the incorporated southwest with the unincorporated northeast portions of San Diego County. The County Board of

Supervisors have recognized this in 2007 and directed staff to work with California State Parks to research the feasibility of the State transferring the trail easements, license agreements and permits to the County for maintenance and management of the trail within San Diego County as part of the County Trails Program. This research is ongoing until a recommendation can be made to the Board of Supervisors.

### Coast to Crest Trail (San Dieguito River Park)

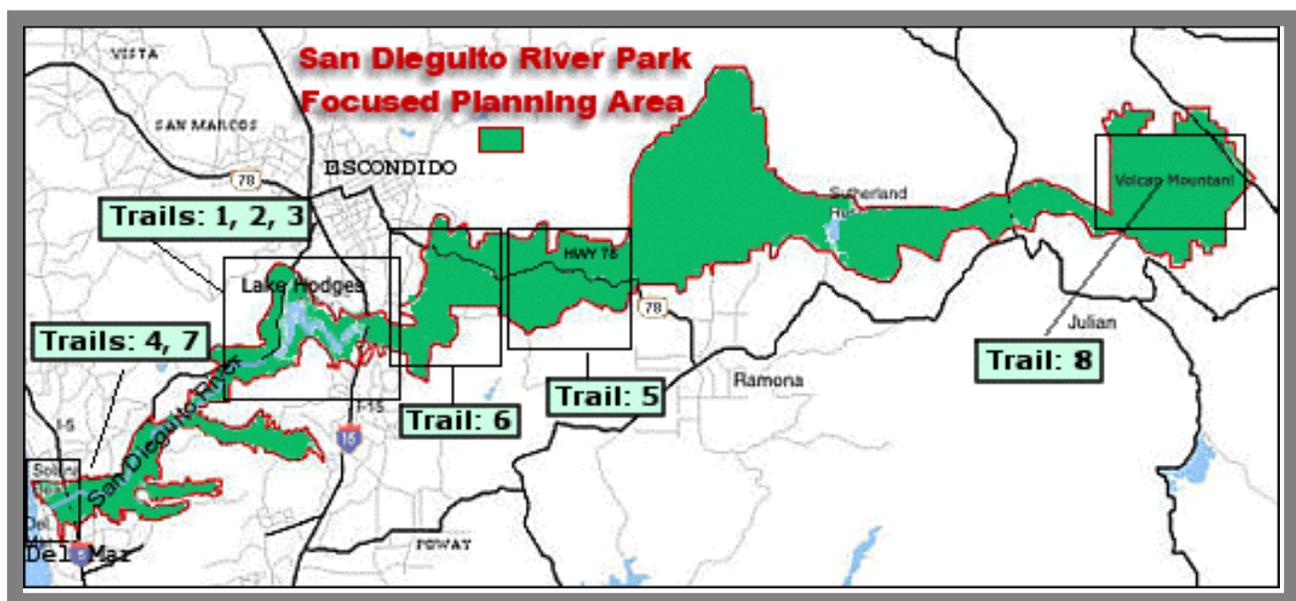
The San Dieguito River Valley Regional Open Space Park Joint Powers Authority is the agency responsible for creating a natural open space park in the San Dieguito River Valley.

The San Dieguito River Park goal is to create a multi-use trail system for hikers, bicyclists and horseback riders that will extend from

the ocean at Del Mar to the San Dieguito River's source at Volcan Mountain, just north of Julian. This is a distance of approximately 55 miles. This linear trail system has been named the "Coast to Crest Trail".

Specific trail alignments will be defined as area master plans are completed, or as funding becomes available for individual segments. Future trails will be aligned along existing rights of way and back country dirt roads whenever possible, in order to minimize impacts to the natural environment, existing uses, such as farming, cattle ranching and private residences.

Some portions of the Coast to Crest Trail have been completed and are open to the public. In addition, some auxiliary trails within the San Dieguito River Park are open to public use. Auxiliary trails are not part of the Coast to Crest Trail system.



## Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail

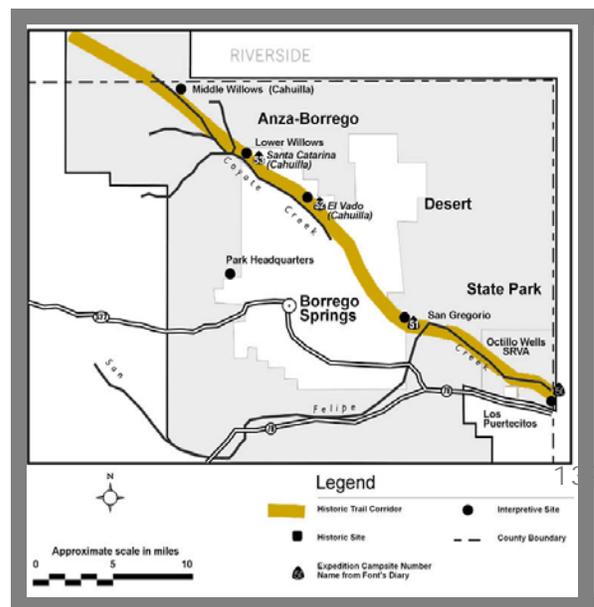


The Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail was authorized by Congress on August 15, 1990, the first such trail in the Western Region of the National Park Service. It is one of the long distance National Historic Trails in the United States. As originally planned it would run from Nogales, Arizona, to San Francisco, California, following as closely as possible the historic route taken by Anza and 240 immigrants in the winter of 1775-76. However, since the expedition started in Culiacan, Sinaloa, Mexico, plans are under way to include the 600 miles of the route that lie within Mexico to make it the first International Historic Trail in the world.

Before the entire length of trail can be opened for public use, much planning and negotiating will be necessary, requiring

several years. One section of the trail is open within the boundaries of the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park in California. The first section to be opened to the public in Arizona lies between Tumacacori National Historical Park and Tubac Presidio State Historic Park. It is a hiking and equestrian trail only, but plans are underway for signage of a bike trail along the back roads from Nogales to Tubac. Eventually, signage of the route along the interstate will also be accomplished.

### The Juan De Anza Bautista Historic Trail Corridor



## Otay Valley Regional Park Trail

The Otay Valley Regional Park (OVRP) is located in the southern portion of San Diego County, four miles north of the United States-Mexico International Border. When completed, it will be a 13 mile linear park with more than 8,000 acres. The Park crosses three jurisdictions and a multi-jurisdictional planning effort was formed in 1990 between the City of Chula Vista, City of San Diego and the County of San Diego, utilizing a Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement (JEPA) for the purpose of planning and acquisitions for the regional park.



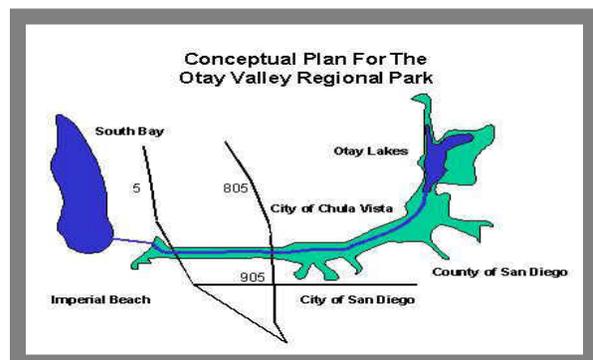
Like other major river parks in San Diego County, the OVRP provides significant open space and recreational opportunities for citizens of the region and will represent one of the major open space areas within the southern portion of San Diego County. The trails planned for the OVRP are non-motorized, multi-use will highlight the Otay River Valley recreational, educational, natural, scenic, cultural and historic resources; thus, appealing to a wide range of

recreational users including both residents and visitors who enjoy hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, bird or wildlife viewing, exercising. The trails will also serves as an alternative transportation system connecting surrounding neighborhoods via a trail system.

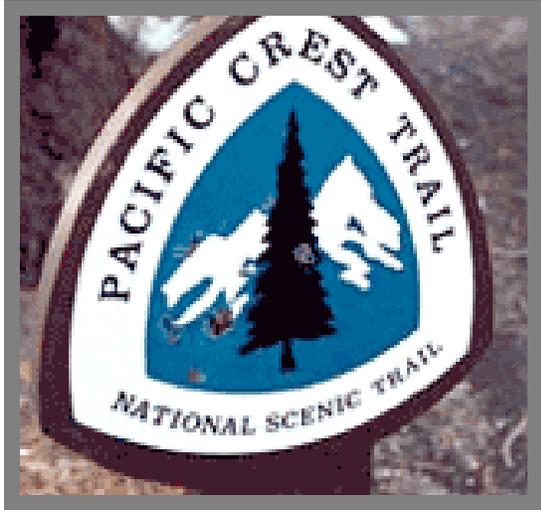


*View of OVRP river corridor from Finney Overlook*

When completed, OVRP regional trail will be an integral part of a larger regional trails network extending from the Silver Strand through the Otay Valley. Then, from the east side of Otay Lakes Reservoir, the OVRP trail will connect to the California Riding and Hiking Trail in the East County passing through the communities of Jamul-Dulzura, Crest- Dehesa and Alpine and connecting to the Pacific Crest Trail in the Cuyamaca Rancho State Park.



## Pacific Crest Trail



The Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) spans 2,650 miles from Mexico to Canada through the three west coast states. The route was first explored in the late 1930s by teams of young men from the YMCA. Once proven feasible, trail pioneers Clinton Clarke and Warren Rogers lobbied the federal government to secure a border-to-border trail corridor. They had to settle, however, for several disconnected trails along the crest of each state. Largely through the efforts of hikers and equestrians, the PCT was eventually designated one of the first scenic trails in the National Trails System authorized by Congress in 1968, and was dedicated in 1993.

The PCT has been designated as a non-mechanized trail by the U.S. Forest Service (the agency responsible for management of the trail). This means the trail is open to foot and horse (or other pack stock) travel only. Bicycles and motorized vehicles are not permitted.

Travel along the PCT reveals the beauty of the desert, displays of the glaciated expanses of the Sierra Nevada, and provides commanding vistas of volcanic peaks and glaciers in the Cascade Range. Zigzagging its way from Mexico to Canada through California, Oregon and Washington the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) boasts the greatest elevation changes of any of America's National Scenic Trails. It passes through six out of seven of North America's eco-zones including high and low desert, old-growth forest and artic-alpine country.

The PCT is a trail of diversity and extremes--from scorching desert valleys in Southern California to rain forests in the Pacific Northwest, the PCT offers hikers and equestrians a unique, varied experience. For anyone planning a trip on the PCT, the Pacific Crest Trail Association is an excellent source of information for trail conditions, maintenance work parties and photographs.



*Rest Area along the PCT near Anza Borrego Desert*

## San Diego River Park Regional Trail

On September 13, 2002, State Assembly Bill 2156 was signed by Governor Davis, establishing the San Diego River Conservancy, creating the eighth state-chartered conservancy in California, and the first in San Diego County. Governor Davis also announced \$12 million of State bond money has been dedicated to begin this effort. This act recognizes the San Diego River is of statewide significance for its natural and cultural resources.

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*"We found there a good-sized river which empties into the sea through an estuary which the ships used as a watering-station. This river has a very large, broad plain on banks, which seems to be of very good soil, with many willows, some poplars, and some alders, although so far it has not been possible to examine it properly.*

*If the river is permanent it may prove in time to be the best of those discovered in all of California. On the banks of the river, which are thickly covered with willows, there are many Castilian rose bushes with very fragrant roses, which I have held in my hand and smelled. All the plain is dotted over with wild grapevines, which look as if they had been planted, and at present, their many branches are in bloom."*

***Written June 9, 1769 by Father Juan Crespi  
to Father Francisco Paulo***

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The vision, a greenbelt of open space, recreation and community facilities, trails, cultural and historical sites with interpretive signs stretching from the mountains of eastern San Diego County near Julian to the Pacific Ocean along the 52-mile long San Diego is a bold one.



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*Mouth of the San Diego River at Ocean Beach*

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For over 20 years, many had this dream of a greenbelt, known as the San Diego River Park. The land surrounding the river is both public and private ownership. It contains dozens of threatened or endangered wildlife species. As envisioned, it will consist of a system of community and regional parks linked together by trails, functioning wildlife habitat and clean water.



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*Entrance to Lakeside's River Park Segment*

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## Sweetwater River and Loop Trail

The County of San Diego has been working with the communities of Spring Valley, Bonita (Sweetwater) and Jamul to expand non-motorized recreational trail opportunities within their boundaries. Continued urbanization and development has increased the need for outdoor and open space recreation.

In 1980, the execution of a License Agreement between Sweetwater Authority and the County of San Diego enabled a major segment of the loop trail to be opened for public use along the southern shoreline of the reservoir. The Sweetwater Reservoir Riding and Hiking Trail is approximately 5.5 miles long. The trail entrance is at Sweetwater Regional Park off of San Miguel Road in Bonita. Only non-motorized uses are allowed on the trail--pedestrians, bicyclists and equestrians.



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*Along the Sweetwater River and Loop Trail*

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The communities have expressed that one of the primary recreational goals is to complete a loop trail around the Sweetwater Reservoir. Such a trail will create an important recreational legacy within the region.



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*View of the Sweetwater Reservoir*

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In February 25, 2002 the Board of Supervisors directed staff, through the Department of Public Works, to develop preliminary implementation plan. The purpose was to recommend a trail alignment along the north shore of the Sweetwater Reservoir to complete a loop trail system of approximately 11 miles for non-motorized recreational trail opportunities for the region. This trail alignment would utilize the existing trail tread already in place to the fullest extent possible. However, easements from private property owners are necessary and must be secured prior to the implementation phase of the project.

