



STATE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Lancaster, CA

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STAFF REPORT: Statewide Trails Office

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SUBJECT: Update on the primary trail concerns managed by the
Statewide Trails Office

OBJECTIVE

To provide the State Park and Recreation Commission an update on the Department's non-motorized trail policies, planning processes and primary concerns heard from stakeholders and the public.

INTRODUCTION

The Statewide Trails Office is a section of the Strategic Planning and Recreations Services Division, responsible for roads and trails within state parks including Road and Trail Management Plans, [Change-In-Use Assessments](#), Trails Inventory/Mapping, Annual Training for District Trails Coordinators, as well as providing support for trails statewide ([California Trails & Greenways](#), [California Recreational Trails Plan](#), [Trails Handbook](#)).

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Demands on the State's non-motorized Roads and Trails System continues to increase over the years. Along with the need to accommodate various modes of access, i.e. pedestrian, equestrian, mountain bicyclist and e-bikes, conflict between users and safety of trails is also a major concern. Through regulations, policies and planning procedures, the Department seeks to accommodate users and increase the opportunities, while also

taking into consideration safety concerns and the preservation of our natural and cultural resources.

The following resources provide guidance on the management of the Department's Statewide Roads and Trails System.

- Public Resources Codes and California Codes of Regulations
- California Recreational Trails Plan & Progress Report
- Trails Policy and E-Bike Policy
- Trails Handbook
- Roads and Trails Management Plans
- Change-in-Use (CIU) Process

A description of these items can be found on the Department's Roads & Trails Program website at https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=1324

DESCRIPTION

Trail use safety and the Change-in-Use (CIU) process

Allowed use on many trails was designated prior to the advent and popularity of mountain bicycling. Latent demand for mountain bike opportunities, has brought about an increase in request to add bicycles to existing trails. Equestrians and equestrian groups are concerned that bikes and horses are incompatible on natural surfaced single-track trails due to bike speeds and associated safety issues, and that equestrian trail experiences are being jeopardized by authorized and unauthorized mountain bike use. Similar issues with bikes have been brought forth by some hikers. The Department developed CIU process in 2008 to evaluate CIU request to include trail safety and sustainability.

Addressing non-system routes

Various circumstances, including but not limited to poorly maintained system trails, insufficient access, and unmet trail experience can lead to the development of user-created or volunteer trails. These are called "non-system" routes by the Department. These unplanned routes do not comply with required environmental regulations nor the Department's Trail Handbook, and are often unsustainable, lead to safety issues, and negatively impact park resources. Mountain bike groups have requested the department discuss and eventually develop a process to determine how to best address these non-system routes.

Trail Maintenance

The Department acknowledges that many trails are in poor condition due to lack of proper maintenance. This lack of maintenance is often

communicated to the department through written and verbal public comments. The Department is working on improving trail maintenance capabilities through increased training, partnership, staffing, and management prioritization.

E-Bikes and other electric devices on non-motorized trails

Fairly recent legislative and code changes have declassified electric bicycles (E-Bikes) as being motorized. The Department is mandated to follow codes and policies whose intent is to limit the use of devices with motors on non-motorized trails in certain park unit classifications. The growing interest in E-Bike recreation results in comments from the public related to E-Bike access to trails, primarily related to greater access for E-Bikes and safety concerns regarding E-bikes. The Department has developed a policy to addresses E-bike use in California State Park units.

COMMISSION ACTION(S)

Update Only

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Roads and Trails Program \(ca.gov\)](https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=1324) or https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=1324
- California Code of Regulations Title 14, Division 3, Chapter 2, Section 4360
- California Vehicle Code Sections 312.5 and 21207.5