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# CALIFORNIA RECREATIONAL TRAILS PLAN

Providing Vision and Direction for California Trails



## Executive Summary Progress Report 2011



California State Parks  
Planning Division  
Statewide Trails Section

[www.parks.ca.gov/trails/trailsplan](http://www.parks.ca.gov/trails/trailsplan)

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# Message from the Director



Above: Director Ruth Coleman  
Cover photos, clockwise from left:  
Rim of the Valley Trail, courtesy Santa Monica  
Mountains Conservancy; Sacramento River,  
courtesy City of Sacramento; Tahoe Rim Trail

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**The ability to exercise and enjoy nature** in the outdoors is critical to the physical and mental health of California's population. Trails and greenways provide the facilities for these activities. Our surveys of Californian's recreational use patterns over the years have shown that our variety of trails, from narrow back-country trails to spacious paved multi-use facilities, provide experiences that attract more users than any other recreational facility in California. Our trails also provide carbon-free pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian connections and scenic routes linking our communities to favorite recreation destinations on the coast and in the mountains and desert. The increasing population and desire for trails are increasing pressures on the agencies charged with their planning, maintenance and management.

As leaders in the planning and management of all types of trail systems, California State Parks is committed to assisting the State's recreation providers by complying with its legislative mandate of recording the progress of the California Recreational Trails Plan. During the preparation of this progress report, input was received through surveys, two California Recreational Trails Committee public meetings and a session at the 2011 California Trails and Greenways Conference. Preparation of this progress report included extensive research into the current status of the 27 California Trail Corridors, determining which of these corridors need administrative, funding or planning assistance. Research and public input regarding the Plan's twelve Goals and their associated Action Guidelines have identified both encouraging progress and areas where more attention is needed. This report will inform the Legislature of the benefits of trails and trail programs and emphasize the need to continue to direct resources towards these recreation facilities.

This Executive Summary offers highlights of progress. The full report can be viewed and downloaded from our Statewide Trails website at [www.parks.ca.gov/trails/trailsplan](http://www.parks.ca.gov/trails/trailsplan). Trails are very important in State Parks and many other outdoor recreation areas around California. These facilities provide not only an outlet for the daily pressures of busy adults throughout our State, but also for the well-being of our children into the future.

Sincerely,

Ruth Coleman, Director  
California State Parks

# California Recreational Trails Plan Progress Report

**What is the California Recreational Trails Plan?** The California Recreational Trails Plan assesses the present and future demand of trail-oriented recreation uses and recommends an integrated system of trail routes to serve California. Twenty-seven routes are proposed. Three main north-south routes are the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail and the California Coastal Trail. There are twelve east-west routes extending from the mountains, often clear to the coast, and land routes circling the San Francisco Bay, the San Fernando Valley and Lake Tahoe. Other routes traverse the California desert, Santa Monica Mountains, the Santa Cruz Range and the Peninsular Range. The trails offer a spectrum of recreation; including wilderness backpacking and equestrian pack trips, biking, jogging, or rollerblading through urban neighborhoods, or heritage corridors that connect historic landmarks, recreation areas and timeless scenic landscapes.

The California Recreational Trails Plan provides insight to management agencies on the benefits of trails to California's changing population, how to acquire funding, methods of effective stewardship and how to encourage cooperation among trail users. The California Recreational Trails Plan also serves as a guide to developing a trail management process and highlights the continued effort to provide excellent hiking, riding and bicycling experiences to various trail users throughout the state. The California Recreational Trails Plan encourages local and regional trail management agencies to add or connect to the statewide trails network. Preparation of a recreational trails plan for California was directed by the legislature as an element of the California Recreational Trails Act (PRC Section 5070 - 5077.8).



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## Acronyms

- ADA - Americans with Disabilities Act
- BLM - Bureau of Land Management
- CSP - California State Parks
- NPS - National Park Service
- PG&E - Pacific Gas and Electric
- PRC - Public Resources Code
- USFS - United States Forest Service





Pacific Crest Trail



Bay Area Ridge Trail

**Why is the Plan important?** Eighty-five percent of Californians live within ten miles of the 27 routes of the state's Recreational Trails System. These trail corridors serve many major cities and towns in California, providing recreation access to millions of people and connecting them to parks, forests, beaches and other public lands. Utilizing trails is a popular form of recreation for health and wellbeing as trails provide socialization, relaxation and fitness opportunities.

Many local agencies see the importance of trail systems to the physical and mental health of the people who exercise and relax along them. However, the development of a trail management system is often new to local trail providers. The California Recreational Trail Plan's Goals and Actions are a guide to the elements of such a system. Aligning a trail or trail system with the Recreational Trails Plan often improves opportunities to receive grant funding.

**What is the 2011 Progress Report?** The California Recreational Trails Act, in PRC Section 5070.7, requires that a report describing progress in carrying out the California Recreational Trails Plan be prepared and submitted to the Legislature every two years. The 2011 Progress Report describes the current status of the 27 California Regional Trail Corridors within the California Recreational Trails System and progress on the program goals of the plan since the 2009 progress report.

**How was this progress report prepared?** Managers and representatives of the California Recreational Trails System's 27 California Trail Corridors were surveyed to report the current status of trails they oversee. Another survey was sent to trail advocates and professionals throughout California to gather information on the importance of the California Recreational Plan Program Goals, progress that has been made on these goals and funding needs. Information was also solicited at two public meetings and a session at the 2011 California Trails and Greenways conference.

Other research data was collected from California State Parks' trails newsletters, websites of trail groups, California State Parks staff and California Recreational Trails Committee members to address the following topics:

- Challenges trail organizations are encountering
- Challenges trail managers are encountering
- Sources of funding
- Trail projects completed
- Examples of trail activities
- Progress made on trail access and use

# Goals Progress

## *Plan goals and examples of progress*

**Funding.** *Develop adequate and stable funding for planning, acquisition, development and management of trails.* Primary funding sources used for California trails include bonds, other California State Parks federal grants (Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Recreational Trails Program), transportation funds, American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds, offers to dedicate and mitigate funding, county and city funds, and Propositions 40, 50 and 84. Currently, more funding is needed for trail maintenance, planning and increasing access. Agencies are also looking for funds to keep management and operations going.

**Trails Inventory.** *Prepare regional and statewide inventories of existing, planned, and potential trails.* Several counties and land trusts are updating maps of trail systems and open spaces. These inventories can be used in management and implementation plans by identifying existing trail segments and gaps in trails, prioritizing work and as an aid in grant applications. An example includes the American Trails' National Recreation Trail Database.

**Regional and Statewide Land Use Planning.** *Promote and encourage the incorporation of trails and greenways development and linkages into all local and statewide land use planning processes.* Some land-use planners are now including trails in transportation plans. Others are including roads and trails together, or combining trails with housing development plans. Five counties are working together to plan the Great California Delta Trail. San Diego, Sonoma and Marin Counties are currently updating their trail plans, as are cities as diverse as Bridgeport, Corona and Norco.

**Trail Advocacy and Collaboration.** *Develop and encourage expanded cooperation and collaboration among trail advocates, wildlife advocates, and cultural resource advocates to maximize resource protection, education, and trail use opportunities.* Several cities are working with counties to link bicycle and pedestrian trails together. Others are collaborating regionally to link trails along riverways.

**Trail Research.** *Promote research that documents trail usage, environmental impacts and trail-based recreational trends and identifies future issues and needs.* GIS trail photo monitoring is being used to catalog and assess trail features. Other research is used to develop budgets and visualize problem areas, such as the Bay Trail's Wildlife and Public Access Study.



Bay Area Ridge Trail



Santa Ana River Trail

# Goals Progress continued

## *Plan goals and examples of progress*



Santa Ana River Trail

**Statewide Trail Stewardship.** *Promote adequate design, construction, relocation, and maintenance of trails in order to optimize public access and resource conservation.* County and city parks are utilizing volunteers to maintain and enhance their stewardship goals. Groups are finding volunteers through Adopt-A-Trail, Volunteer for Outdoor America, Teens on Trail and the CalFire Inmate Program. Trail agencies are using volunteers to support parks and trails doing projects such as erosion control, trail design and construction, brushing corridors, making repairs, removing fallen logs, developing interpretive and directional signage and general maintenance.

**Encouraging Public Use of Trails.** *Encourage public use of and support for trails programs throughout California.* Some trail experts reported that public use of trails in the California trails system has progressed greatly, especially in the number of people using trails. Encouraging public trail use has been accomplished in several ways, including making maps and brochures available online and at trailheads, installing signage, advertising guided hikes and hiking clubs, publishing trail maps with existing and planned trails, utilizing the California State Parks website and hosting events in parks or on trails to entice people who are not usual park visitors. Brochures and online interactive maps also encourage public use of trails by reaching out to a wider community base.



Tahoe Rim Trail

**Trail Accessibility.** *Provide trail users with easily accessible trails and accurate information on trail locations and conditions.* Grants have funded trail connections, which provide more access. Approximately 10.5 miles of universally-accessible trail have been constructed within California State Parks. Accessibility managers would like to see more funding opportunities to continue accessible trail renovations and provide more access to various user groups on trails. The Department of Justice posted new regulations for wheelchairs and other power-driven mobility devices to enable access to trails and parks by more people with disabilities.

**Multi-use Cooperation.** *Provide the maximum opportunities for the public use of trails by encouraging the appropriate expansion of multi-use trails.* User groups include hikers, dog walkers, cyclists and equestrians. Collaborative efforts in promoting multi-use trails have encouraged organized equestrian trail rides and organized half marathon trail runs. Some groups are maintaining multi-use trails through the work of volunteer park hosts and community volunteers. Other areas are developing committees comprised of different user groups to identify areas that need improvement. However, conflict



remains. At present, there are disputes in Los Angeles, Sacramento, and Marin counties and elsewhere.

**Private Property Owners.** *Work to identify and resolve conflicts between property owners and trail users and advocates.* In key areas, park managers and private property owners are collaborating to provide public access for people and corridors for wildlife. Oftentimes, parks staff work together with private property owners to determine the feasibility of developing a trail within trail easements. But some farmers and land owners remain wary of connecting their property with parks and trails. Grants and private funding help agencies purchase private property to link trail segments.

**Trails Program Leadership.** *The Department's Statewide Trails Office will continue its guidance and leadership roles in promoting the advancement of trails and trails programs throughout California.* State Parks' California Trails and Greenways Conference continues to provide trails training to encourage cooperation between trail users and agencies. Over 700 trail professionals and advocates participated in the last two California Trails and Greenways conferences held in Cambria (2010) and San Ramon (2011). The Statewide Trails Program also promotes the advancement of trail programs and provides information about available funding. A Programmatic Environmental Impact Report is being proposed that will facilitate an innovative process to address potential changes in trail use in state parks.

**California Riding and Hiking Trail.** *Evaluate the status of previously secured easements for the California Riding and Hiking Trail and evaluate the feasibility for continuance of the trail's expansion.* About three miles of trail were transferred to local agencies in San Mateo County, and other portions of the trail were incorporated into the Bay Area Ridge Trail. Information about the Riding and Hiking Trail route was provided to trail agencies and advocates in San Diego, San Bernardino and Los Angeles counties, but progress in transferring rights-of-ways there stalled because of reductions in recreation agencies' budgets.



Courtesy Dan Slater



Biking in the Delta

# California Trail Corridor Progress

## Trail descriptions and current status



- ① **California Coastal Trail.** *Managed by the California State Coastal Conservancy, CSP, California Coastal Commission and Caltrans.* Half of this 1,150-mile multi-use trail along the California coastline is open to the public. Many regional trails and river greenways connect to this jewel of the California coast. Twenty-five miles of new rights-of-way and five miles of new trails, along with trail identification signs, interpretive facilities and support facilities have been added over the past two years.



- ② **California Desert Trail.** *Managed by the Desert Trail Association.* This trail is a 650-mile route through the California desert from Mexico to Nevada, and utilizes trails, existing roads and cross-country travel to traverse public lands. It is less formalized and managed than other regional trails.

- ③ **Condor Trail.** *Managed by the Los Padres National Forest.* Ten new miles of trail are open, making 75 percent of the Condor Trail available to the public. It travels through lower elevation areas in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties.

- ④ **Cross California Ecological Corridor.** *No current manager.* This 180-mile corridor follows Highway 20 and was recently promoted on National Geographic's Geotourism mapguides as an important tourist destination in the west.



- ⑤ **Juan Bautista De Anza National Historic Trail.** *Managed by the National Park Service.* This 1,200-mile heritage corridor traces the route of Spanish explorer Juan Bautista De Anza in California and Arizona. The 220 miles of non-motorized, multi-use unpaved trail and 800 miles of the auto-route component are open to the public. Progress on this trail includes the acquisition of one and a half miles of new right-of-way, trail identification signs and new interpretive facilities.

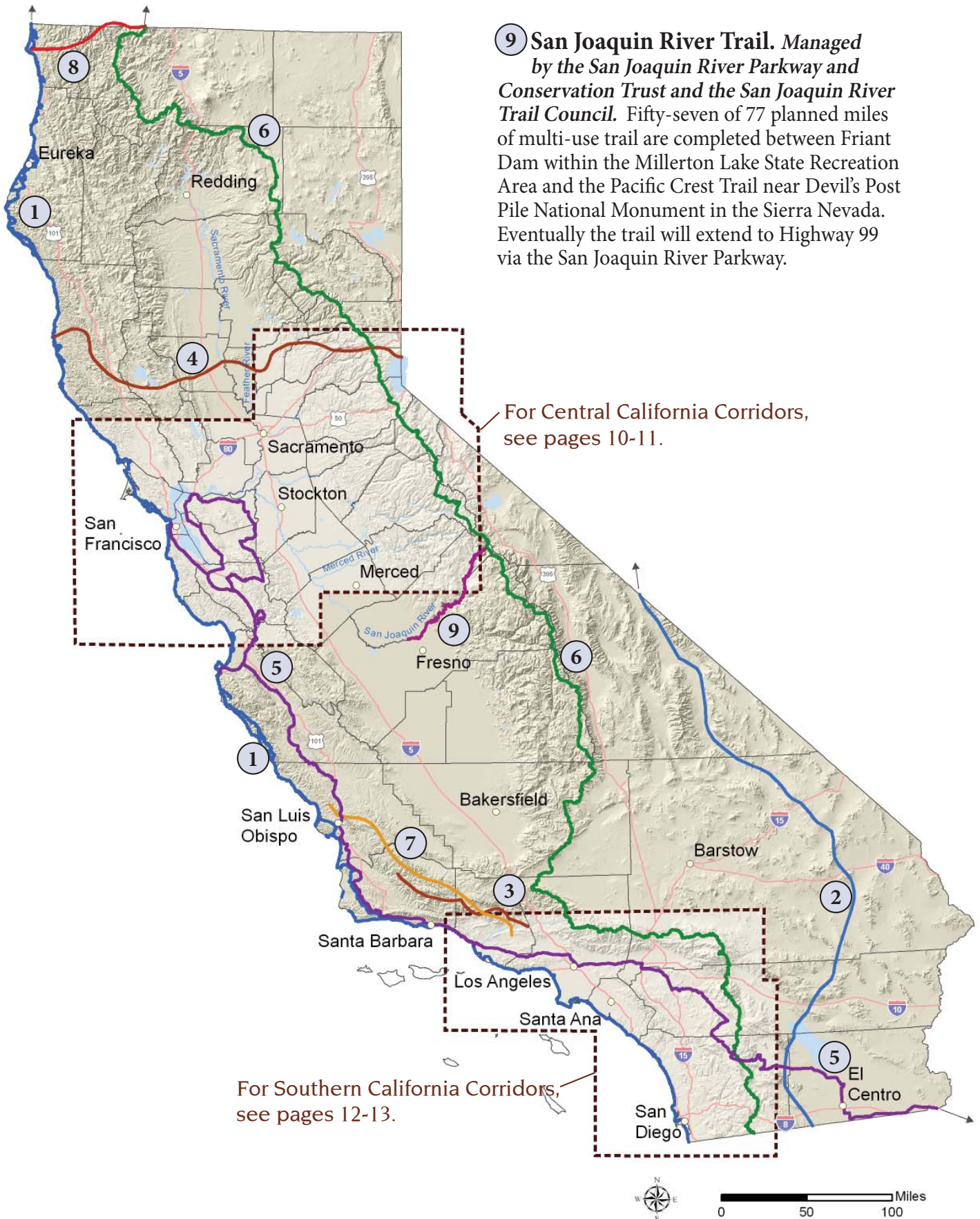


- ⑥ **Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail.** *Managed by the US Forest Service.* The Pacific Crest Trail spans the length of California and continues north. The total length is 2,650 miles with 1,692 miles of hiking and equestrian trail extending the length of California. Recent progress includes maintenance on all trail segments that traverse California, restoration of several multi-use trails on the Tahoe National Forest, and Tejon Ranch Company's commitment to donate a trail right-of-way through the Tehachapi Mountains.

- ⑦ **Cuesta to Sespe Trail.** *Managed by the Los Padres National Forest.* This 250-mile hiking and riding trail runs on existing dirt trails and roads from the Cerro Alto campground west of Atascadero in San Luis Obispo County to the Sespe Condor Sanctuary near Filmore in Ventura County. No recent progress has been reported.

- ⑧ **Redwood Coast to Crest Trail.** *Managed by California State Parks, US Forest Service, and NPS.* This riding and hiking trail goes from Crescent City on the coast to the Pacific Crest Trail in the Cascade Mountains. Seventy percent of this 120-mile trail is complete. In the past two years, a segment of trail was completed.





**9 San Joaquin River Trail.** *Managed by the San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust and the San Joaquin River Trail Council.* Fifty-seven of 77 planned miles of multi-use trail are completed between Friant Dam within the Millerton Lake State Recreation Area and the Pacific Crest Trail near Devil's Post Pile National Monument in the Sierra Nevada. Eventually the trail will extend to Highway 99 via the San Joaquin River Parkway.

For Central California Corridors, see pages 10-11.

For Southern California Corridors, see pages 12-13.

# Central California Trail Corridor Progress

## Trail descriptions and current status



- 1 **American Discovery Trail.** *Managed by the American Discovery Trail Society.* California trail segments include the western terminus at Point Reyes National Seashore as well as routes near the San Francisco Bay, the Delta and the American River Parkway. Two kiosks and many signs at major trail junctions at East Bay Regional Park sites identifying the American Discovery Trail were recently installed.
- 2 **Bay Area Ridge Trail.** *Managed by the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council.* Currently, 325 of the 550 planned miles are open to the public. This multi-use trail creates a contiguous system for long distance hiking over a variety of terrain in the Bay Area by utilizing existing trails within open space and park districts on ridges in nine San Francisco Bay Area counties. In the past two years, four miles of new rights-of-way and 16 miles of other trail opened, along with the creation of a website and maps.
- 3 **California Coastal Trail.** See page 8.
- 4 **Cross California Ecological Corridor.** See page 8.
- 5 **Juan Bautista De Anza National Historic Trail.** See page 8.
- 6 **Lake Tahoe Bikeway 2000.** *Managed by various local communities.* This system of bike trails and bike routes utilizes existing roads and trails within Lake Tahoe Basin communities. Approximately 28 miles of the bike system are completed and open for use. One new mile of trail was completed in the last 24 months. The construction of bicycle lanes along the north shore of the Tahoe Bikeway is underway.
- 7 **Merced River Trail.** *Partially managed by BLM.* Approximately 12 miles of the planned 28-mile trail are complete. The trail follows a historic railroad bed through Sierra National Forest and Merced Irrigation District properties. It is heavily used by the public due to its spring wildflower displays and easy accessibility.
- 8 **Mokelumne Coast to Crest Trail.** *Managed by the East Bay Municipal Utility District and USFS, BLM and PG&E.* About 281 of 330 planned miles of this multi-use trail are open to the public. The trail runs through a diverse landscape as it travels from the East Bay hills through the Delta, across the valley, up the foothills and to the peaks of the Sierra. Progress includes 20 miles of new trail near Upper Mokelumne River Canyon, the construction of support facilities, and a new website and identification signs are available.
- 9 **Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail.** See page 8.
- 10 **Pony Express National Historic Trail.** *Managed by the National Park Service and the National Pony Express Association.* This heritage corridor extends 140 miles in California, tracing the historic route of the Pony Express from 1860-1861. NPS has no land management authority for the trail; it depends heavily on its partners—federal, state, and local governments and private citizens—to preserve existing remnants.
- 11 **San Francisco Bay Trail.** *Managed by the Association of Bay Area Governments.* The multi-use trail encompasses nine Bay Area counties, 47 cities, and public and private properties. Of the 500 miles planned, 300





miles are open to the public, and about 15 miles of new trail opened in the past two years. This trail connects to 60 other local and regional connector trails and provides unique connectivity around the Bay, including through San Francisco and across the Golden Gate Bridge.

**12 Tahoe Rim Trail.** *Managed by the Tahoe Rim Trail Association.* This 165-mile multi-use trail follows the ridge-tops surrounding Lake Tahoe and links to connector trails from many of the basin's communities. Modifications to the alignment continue to improve user experience and trail sustainability. Through the Desolation Wilderness, the trail shares alignment with the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail. In the last 24 months, eight miles of new trails and six interpretive signs were added. In addition, the trail at the Daggett summit was reconstructed.

**13 Tuolumne Complex.** *Management is shared by USDA Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, City of Sonora, and Tuolumne County.* The Tuolumne Complex of trails has potential but is not yet completed as a regional system. Most of its trails are former railroad beds that go through properties of the Stanislaus National Forest, BLM, Tuolumne County and private individuals. They exist in various levels of management and condition and are not publicly promoted.



Lake Tahoe Bikeway 2000



# Southern California Trail Corridor Progress

## *Trail descriptions and current status*



① **Backbone Trail.** *Managed by NPS's Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.* This trail is a patchwork of fire roads, existing and new trails. It provides unique opportunities for long-distance trail use for citizens within the metropolitan Los Angeles area. 60 of the planned 65 miles are open to the public. Recently, a 2.6-mile segment of the trail alignment completed a pathway for the full Backbone Trail System, leaving only the need to secure a public right-of-way for 0.6 miles of the 65-mile trail.

② **California Coastal Trail.** See page 8.

③ **Condor Trail.** See page 8.

④ **Juan Bautista De Anza National Historic Trail.** See page 8.

⑤ **Los Angeles River Trail.** *Managed by the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation.* This planned 26-mile multi-use trail will begin at the Whittier Narrows Dam and continue along the Rio Hondo River to the confluence of the Los Angeles River and end at the Pacific Ocean. 10 miles of trail are open to the public.

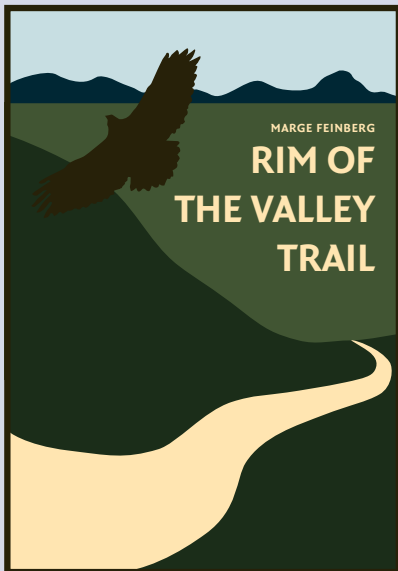
⑥ **Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail.** See page 8.

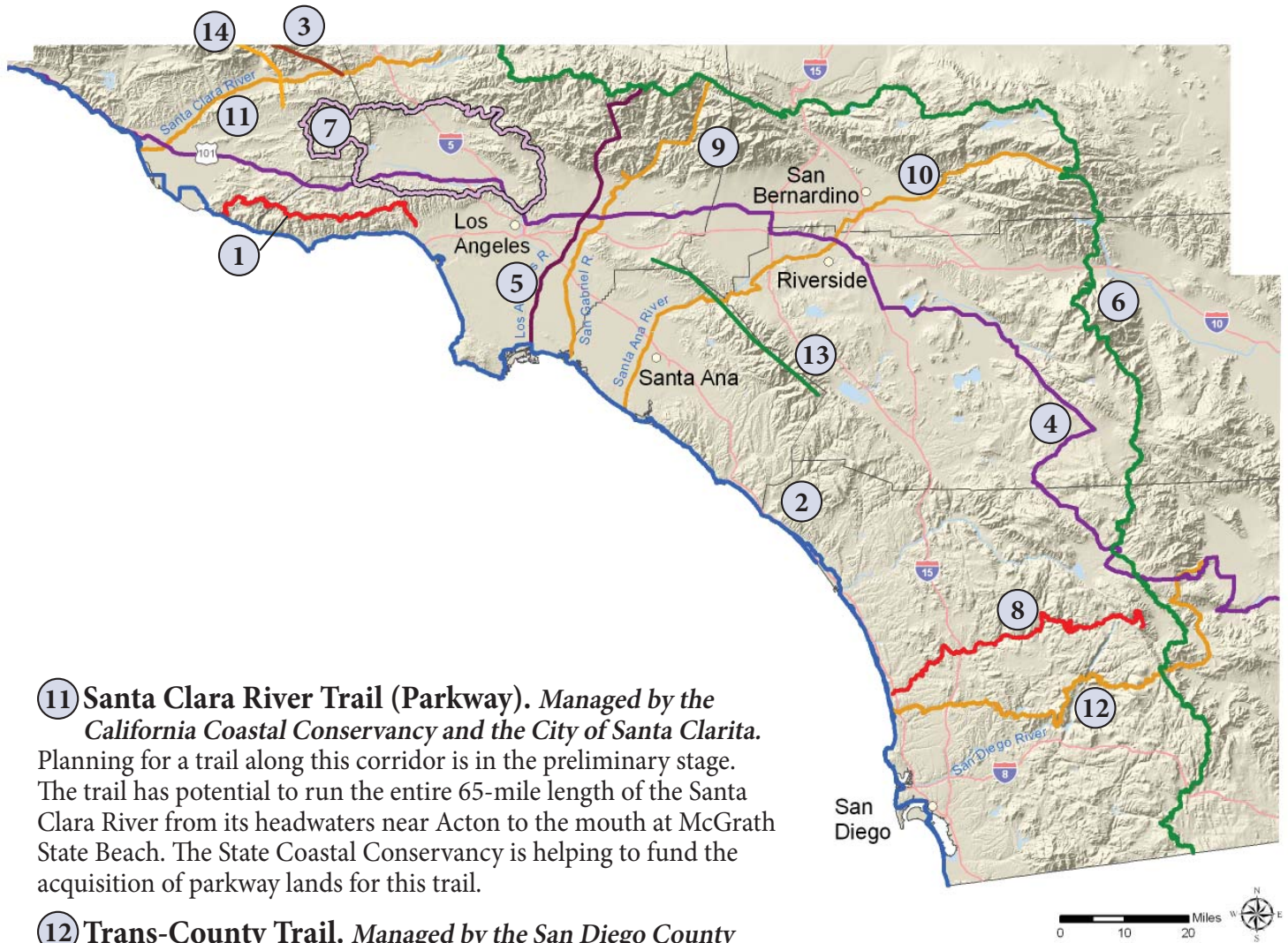
⑦ **Rim of the Valley Trail.** *Managed by NPS's Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, USFS and CSP.* About 80 of 200 planned miles are completed and open to the public; 5.7 miles are currently signed as belonging to the Rim of the Valley trail system, with the remainder associated with other trail systems. Recently, 16 miles of trail have been constructed and four new miles of right-of-way were acquired. NPS is evaluating this corridor's future.

⑧ **San Dieguito River Park Coast to Crest Trail.** *Managed by the San Dieguito River Valley Regional Open Space Park Joint Powers Authority.* Partners include San Diego County, cities of Del Mar, Escondido, Poway, San Diego and Solana Beach. The planned length of this trail is 70 miles. Approximately 33 miles of trail are complete.

⑨ **San Gabriel River Trail.** *Managed by the Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation and the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy.* This 40-mile, multi-use trail along the San Gabriel River extends from Azusa to Seal Beach along the channel's levee road and the adjacent frontage road. Minor trail realignment has taken place near the Santa Fe Dam.

⑩ **Santa Ana River Trail.** *Managed by the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority.* This trail connects with 22 other trails. The total planned length of the trail is 100 miles. Of this, 73 miles are completed, including 30 in the San Bernardino National Forest, and 27 miles are in the design and/or construction phases, which should be completed in the next three years.





**11 Santa Clara River Trail (Parkway).** *Managed by the California Coastal Conservancy and the City of Santa Clarita.* Planning for a trail along this corridor is in the preliminary stage. The trail has potential to run the entire 65-mile length of the Santa Clara River from its headwaters near Acton to the mouth at McGrath State Beach. The State Coastal Conservancy is helping to fund the acquisition of parkway lands for this trail.

**12 Trans-County Trail.** *Managed by the San Diego County Department of Parks and Recreation.* The Trans County Trail is a planned 115-mile east-west route in San Diego County that connects many cities and unincorporated communities. Nearly 75% of this route consists of existing trails that are currently used by the public. Acquisition and construction is still required for the remainder of the trail.

**13 Whittier-Ortega Trail.** *No current manager.* Also known as the Coal Canyon Trail or the Main Divide Trail. It begins in the Whittier Narrows Recreation Area, near the communities of South El Monte and Montebello in Los Angeles County. The connectivity after this point to Chino Hills State Park is poorly documented, going through regional parks, open space and private property. From Chino Hills State Park the trail passes through the Department of Fish and Game’s Coal Canyon Ecological Preserve into Cleveland National Forest.

**14 Cuesta to Sespe Trail.** See page 8.





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# CALIFORNIA RECREATIONAL TRAILS PLAN

## Providing Vision and Direction for California Trails

### Progress Report to the Legislature, Submitted 2011

The preparation of this report was financed in part through a planning grant from the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, under the provisions of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 (Public Law 88-578, as amended).



California Coastal Trail, courtesy Coastwalk



San Gabriel River Trail, courtesy Dan Slater

“Our variety of trails, from narrow back-country trails to spacious paved multi-use facilities, provide experiences that attract more users than any other recreational facility in California. These facilities provide not only an outlet for the daily pressures of busy adults throughout our State, but also for the well-being of our children into the future.”

- Ruth Coleman, California State Parks Director



Santa Ana River Trail



Tahoe Rim Trail



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