



REPORT

THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO TO THE PARK AND RECREATION BOARD

DATE ISSUED: September 8, 2011

REPORT NO: 102

ATTENTION: Park and Recreation Board
Agenda of September 15, 2011

SUBJECT: Black Mountain Ranch Open Space Park Natural Resources Management
Plan - Recommendation for Adoption of Plan

SUMMARY

Issue – Should the Park and Recreation Board recommend approval of the Black Mountain Ranch Open Space Park Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP)?

Director's Recommendation – Recommend approval of the Black Mountain Ranch Open Space Park Natural Resource Management Plan.

Other Recommendations – On July 14, 2011, the Black Mountain Citizens' Advisory Committee unanimously (5-0) voted to recommend approval of the NRMP.

On September 7, 2011, the Rancho Peñasquitos Community Planning Group voted 14-1-0 to recommend approval of the NRMP and associated Community Plan Amendment.

Fiscal Impact – Project implementation costs will be funded by the Open Space Division's Operations and Maintenance budget. Grants will be pursued where possible.

Water and Energy Conservation Status – Not applicable.

Environmental – The City of San Diego as Lead Agency is preparing the Mitigated Negative Declaration and Site Development Permit for this project.

BACKGROUND

In 1997, the San Diego City Council adopted the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) (R-288455). The goal of the MSCP is to maintain regional biodiversity and conserve viable populations of sensitive species and their habitats – and thereby minimize the need for future Endangered Species Act listings – while simultaneously supporting economic growth in the region. One of the actions required by the MSCP is preparation of Area Specific Management Directives (ASMDs), which are management guidelines tailored to individual parks and/or rare

species populations within the Multi-Habitat Planning Area (MHPA). For example, an ASMD for thread-leafed brodiaea may include a defined area for multi-year non-native grass removal through dethatch and weeding.

The Black Mountain Open Space Park (Park) NRMP was developed to provide ASMDs for the Park (online at <ftp://ftp.sannet.gov/OUT/Parks/Black%20Mountain%20Ranch/Black%20Mountain%20Natural%20Resource%20Management%20Plan/>). The NRMP boundary is Black Mountain Road on the north and west and Carmel Mountain Road on the south and east. The 1,552-acre Park is owned by the City of San Diego; its origins date to 1964 when the City acquired the core of the existing Park under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act of 1926. The remaining acres were acquired with Water Conservation Board and Wildlife Conservation Board grant funds, and County Water Authority mitigation funds.

The NRMP is comprised of multiple sections:

- Existing Conditions describes baseline environmental data for the Park, including soils and geology, topography, hydrology, biological and cultural resources, land use, and recreation. The location and extent of environmental variables is discussed in-text and depicted on maps.
- Management Issues describes historic/current management constraints as well as opportunities for improving the environmental conditions of the Park.
- Resource Management describes and prioritizes specific habitat enhancement and maintenance projects. This section also describes proposed changes to the trail system.
- Development, Maintenance and Management Guidelines provides guidance for any future projects permitted by the City. Also included are guidelines for Park maintenance activities, trail planning and development, and fire planning and suppression activities.
- Trails, Public Use and Recreation Guidelines provide policies for trail system development and maintenance and appropriate public uses.
- Mitigation Options and Guidelines include policies for project mitigation within the Park.
- Enhancement and Restoration Guidelines provide direction for natural and cultural resource enhancement projects as well as habitat restoration and invasive species control programs. In addition, management directives for MSCP-covered species are included, along with a summary of MSCP monitoring to-date, future monitoring needs, and a monitoring schedule.
- Interpretive and Research Guidelines direct implementation of academic research, nature trails, and interpretive displays, programs and facilities.
- Implementation discusses the responsibilities of specific parties in the event of future development, on-going City requirements for management of the Park under the MSCP and the Montana Mirador mitigation agreements, and community groups. It also lists and prioritizes tasks for implementation.

The NRMP includes a revised trail system based on a comprehensive trail analysis that surveyed and ranked existing trails by criteria such as habitat sensitivity (e.g. vegetation type, proximity to sensitive species, mitigation sites), erosion and other maintenance factors, redundancy,

connectivity, and safety metrics such as steepness and sightlines. The resulting trail system proposes to maintain closures on 4.02 miles of currently closed trails, closure of an addition 8.46 miles of existing trails, maintenance of 13.53 miles of existing trails, and development of 3.70 miles of new trails. The proposed new trails include the following segments (Figure 1):

- 1) Segment A (0.85 miles) connects the Miner's Ridge Loop Trail to the Glider Point Trail, with a connection west to Lusardi Grasslands under a bridge on Carmel Valley Road. This segment will implement the trail system included in the Rancho Penasquitos Community Plan.
- 2) Segments B (0.091 miles) and C (0.070 miles) are two short segments that will circumvent extremely steep and eroded sections of an existing trail.
- 3) Segment D (0.15 miles) is a mid-length segment that creates a loop on an existing out-and-back viewpoint north of the Montana Mirador parcel.
- 4) Segment E (2.31 miles) is a double loop that is comprised of existing trails and new trail segments in the center of the park. The new segments will replace existing, steep, 'fall-line' trails that are dangerous and subject to erosion.
- 5) Segment F/Trail for All People (0.24 miles) is an ADA-accessible double loop near the Miner's Ridge Loop trailhead.

DISCUSSION

Black Mountain Open Space Park is home to many rare and endangered species such as variegated dudleya, thread-leaved brodiaea, San Diego horned lizard, and California gnatcatcher. The Park has been identified as a core biological area within the MHPA based on acreage, geography, and habitat diversity, and therefore represents a key conservation area within the regional open space network. In addition, the Park is an important destination for natural out-of-doors experiences and recreation opportunities for nearby residents and regional users. The NRMP will balance the needs of natural resources and passive human recreation through development and implementation of ASMDs as well as providing an improved recreational trail system that meets user expectations while complying with MSCP policies. In addition, an adopted NRMP will improve the competitiveness of grant applications for species management and habitat enhancement.

The NRMP and associated trail system were developed with input from community stakeholders including the San Diego Mountain Biking Association (SDMBA), residents of the Stoney Creek Road neighborhood, the Black Mountain Citizens' Advisory Committee, and the Rancho Peñasquitos Community Planning Group. The trail system was revised based on comments from SDMBA and the Stoney Creek Road residents, and both groups now support the current trail proposal. The Black Mountain Citizens' Advisory Committee reviewed the draft NRMP and provided input at meetings on November 18, 2010; January 13, 2011; and May 12, 2011; prior to their unanimous vote in support of adopting the NRMP on July 14, 2011. The Rancho Peñasquitos Community Planning Group reviewed and commented on the NRMP at their June 29, 2011, meeting; prior to their 14-1-0 vote on September 7, 2011.

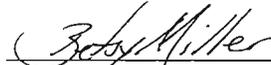
A Mitigated Negative Declaration and Site Development Permit are being prepared for the

NRMP, including trail system development. Following a vote by the Park and Recreation Board, the project will be presented to Planning Commission for 1) a Community Plan Amendment (initiated June 24, 2010) to revise the Rancho Peñasquitos Community Plan trail map to incorporate the new trail system, and 2) to provide a recommendation for City Council. The NRMP will then be taken to City Council following a presentation at the Natural Resources and Culture Subcommittee.

Respectfully submitted,



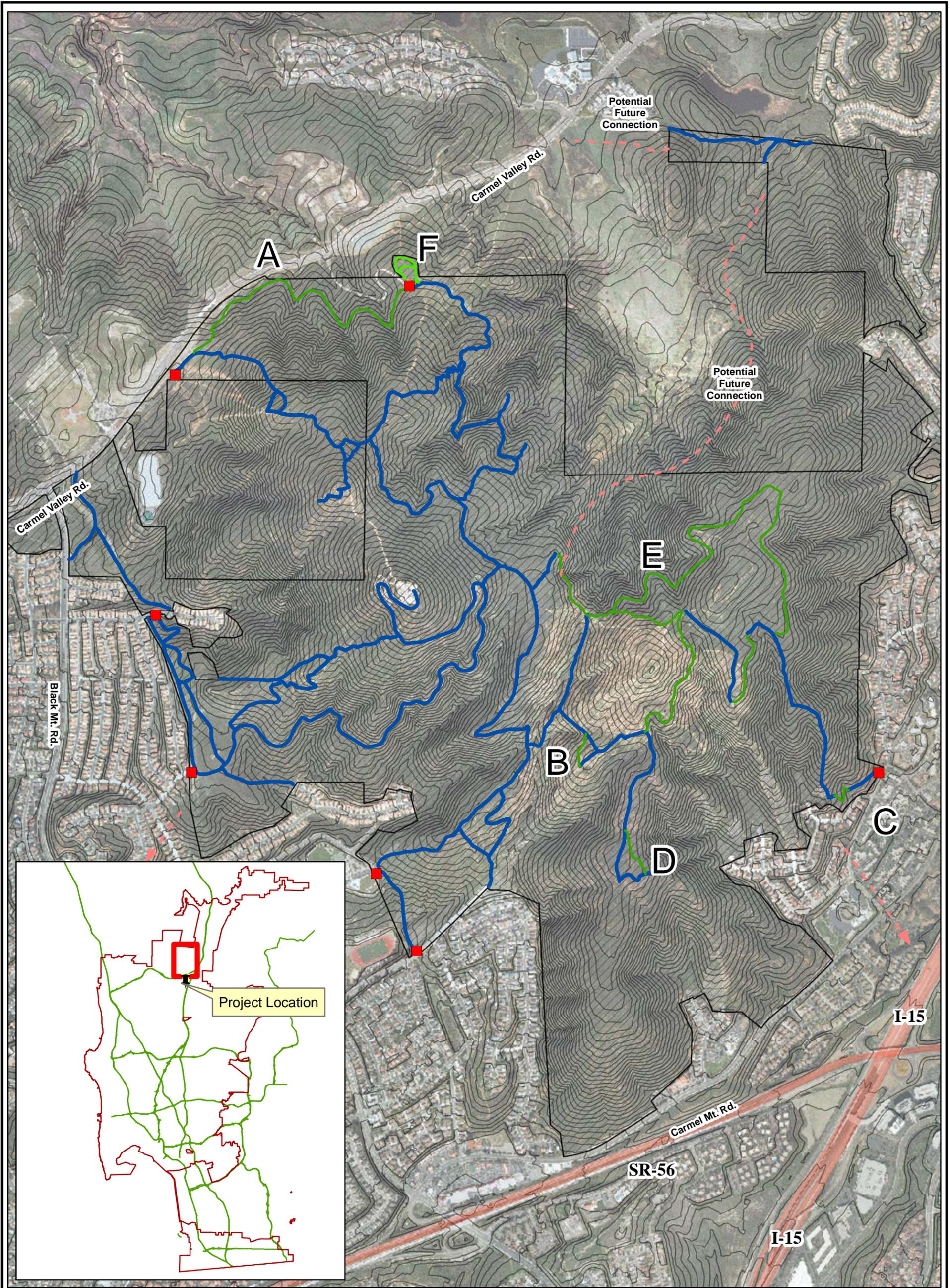
Chris Zirkle
Deputy Director, Open Space Division



Prepared by: Betsy Miller
Biologist III, Open Space Division

Attachment: Figure 1 – Black Mountain Trails Map

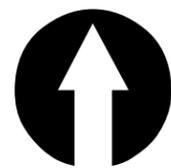
cc: Council District 1
Black Mountain Citizens' Advisory Committee
File



- New - Proposed To Open
- Existing - Proposed to Close
- Existing - To Remain Open
- Existing - Currently Closed
- Trailheads
- MHPA
- Park Boundary

Figure 1

Black Mountain Trails



Map Created By:
Randy Deodat 9/7/11

Sources: SanGIS,
City of San Diego

Every reasonable effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this map. However, neither the SanGIS Corporation nor San Diego Data Processing Corporation assumes any liability arising from its use.

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