

Gorge

Executive Summary

Intent: For the purposes of this planning effort, the Gorge is defined primarily as coincident with the Mission Trails Regional Park (MTRP) boundary but also includes privately owned land between MTRP and Mast Boulevard. The Gorge reach offers a strong sense of enclosure reinforced by the rising walls of Fortuna Mountain and Kwaay Paay Mountain. Mission Trails Regional Park is one of the “jewels” of the San Diego River watershed, and the San Diego River Park offers a

Introduction



Old Mission Dam

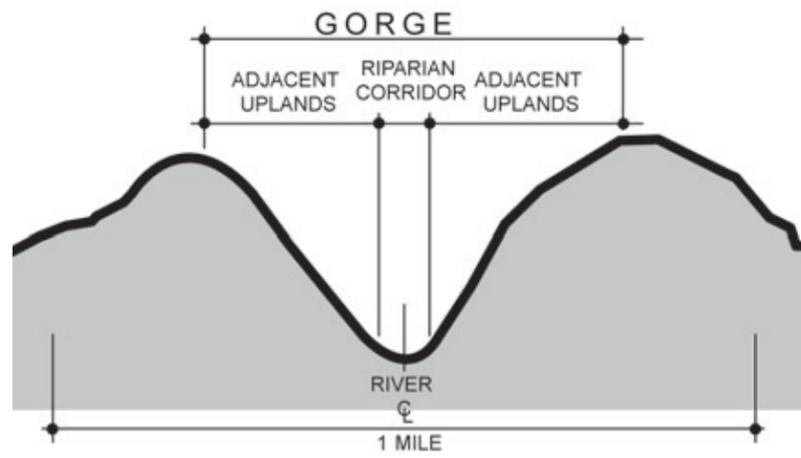
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Gorge Section

means of linking this stunning resource to the area’s other principal natural features.

Condition: Established in 1974, Mission Trails Regional Park has preserved the valley’s original landscape of sage scrub, chaparral, oak woodland and riparian habitats in exceptional condition. At 5,800 acres, Mission Trails Regional Park is one of the largest urban parks in the nation, and a regional destination for hiking, biking, and wildlife viewing. The rich historic layers of the San Diego River valley are revealed in many ways within the park. The Kumeyaay, Spanish missionaries and settlers, and 19th and 20th century ranchers and farmers have all left their mark on the land now within the bounds of Mission Trails Regional Park.



South Fortuna Mountain

Recommendations:

- Support the Mission Trails Regional Park Master Development Plan.
- When Superior Mine redevelops, create a unpaved hike/bike trail at the west end of MTRP that will link the proposed multi-use path through the Superior Mine site with existing hike/bike trails in MTRP
- Create an unpaved hike/bike trail linking the Mast Boulevard trail head with the proposed multi-use trail adjacent to Carlton Oaks Golf Course that will ultimately connect MTRP with Mast Park and Santee Lakes in the City of Santee

Efforts in the Gorge should align with and support the mission of Mission Trails Regional Park. The goals of the San Diego River Park Master Plan are in harmony with those of the Mission Trails Regional Park Master Development Plan and focus on continually improving hydrology and habitat along the length of the river. The San Diego River Park Plan should seek collaborative opportunities with MTRP to further enhance and preserve the conditions already present at the park. That effort should explore the possibility of a soft surface trail linking the river corridor west of the park with Father Junipero Serra Trail and the MTRP Visitor Center. Planning efforts should also consider improving the bike lanes or creating a trail if impossible within the Mission Gorge Road right-of-way; this trail would create internal and external connection, within the park and with up-stream communities.



The Gorge in Mission Trails Regional Park

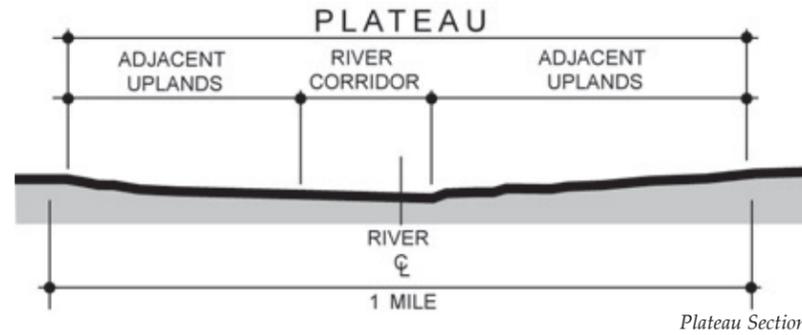
Plateau

Intent: East of Mission Trails Regional Park, the terrain again opens and reveals expansive views to the hills above Santee and to the distant mountains in the Cleveland National Forest. This expanse offers a sense of release from the narrow, enclosed condition of the river in the Gorge Reach. The Plateau is an opportunity to integrate the river experience with adjacent development and the City of Santee. The San Diego River Park should focus on connecting Mission Trails Regional Park with Mast Park and Santee Lakes. These points should be linked by a multi-use path system integrated within a larger habitat corridor.

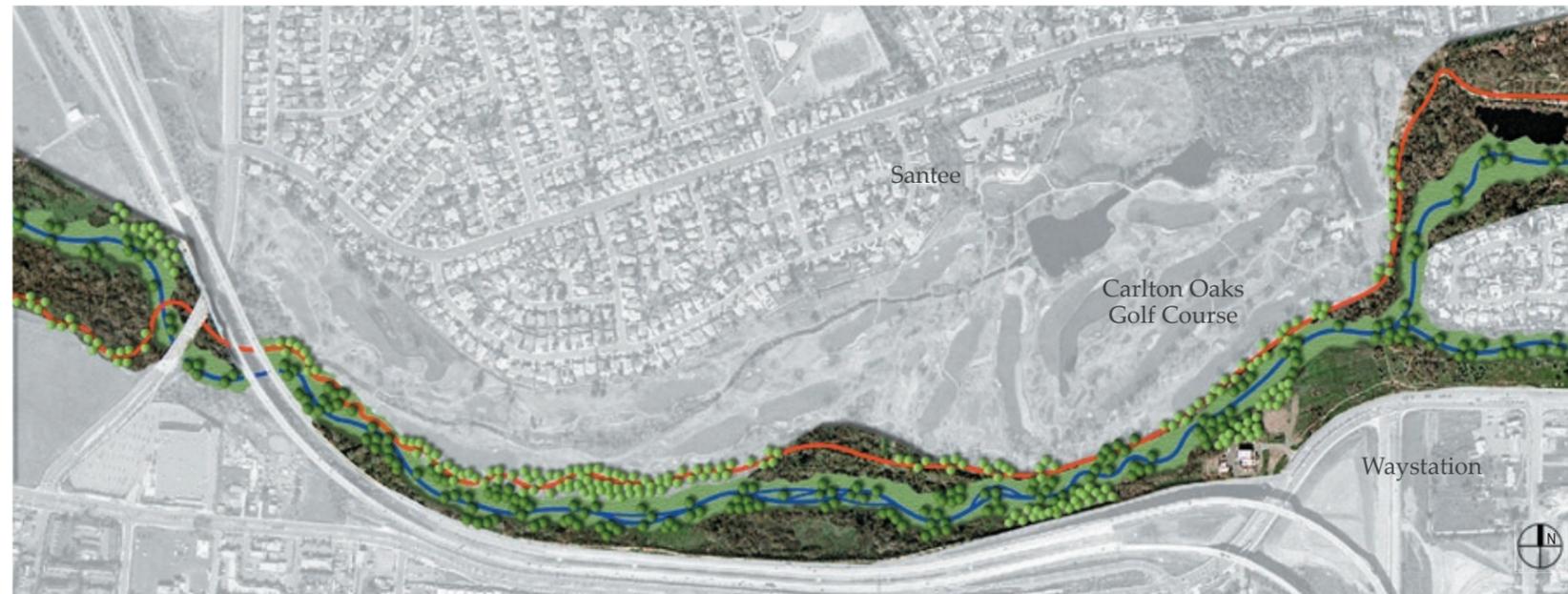
Condition: The San Diego River is negatively impacted by a variety of physical constraints. A dike along the southern edge of the Carlton Oaks Golf Course and SR-52 to the south and west separates the river and the golf course. Heavy infestations of Giant Reed, Brazilian pepper, and fountain grass (*Pennisetum sp.*) and other exotic species degrade water and vegetative quality. Other than golf, recreational resources are minimal, but an informal pedestrian trail exists on the north side of the river at the east end of Carlton Oaks Golf Course through Environmental Trust land and to the City of Santee.

Recommendations:

- Create a trail head and gateway to the City of San Diego sections of the San Diego River Park.
- Build trail along the south edge of Carlton Oaks Golf Course.
- Establish a minimum open space corridor that follows the 100 year floodway.
- Create a connection under SR-52 leading to Mission Trails Regional Park.



Invasive vegetation management project in progress



Conceptual San Diego River Park at Carlton Oaks Golf Course

Key Sites:

Carlton Oaks Golf Course

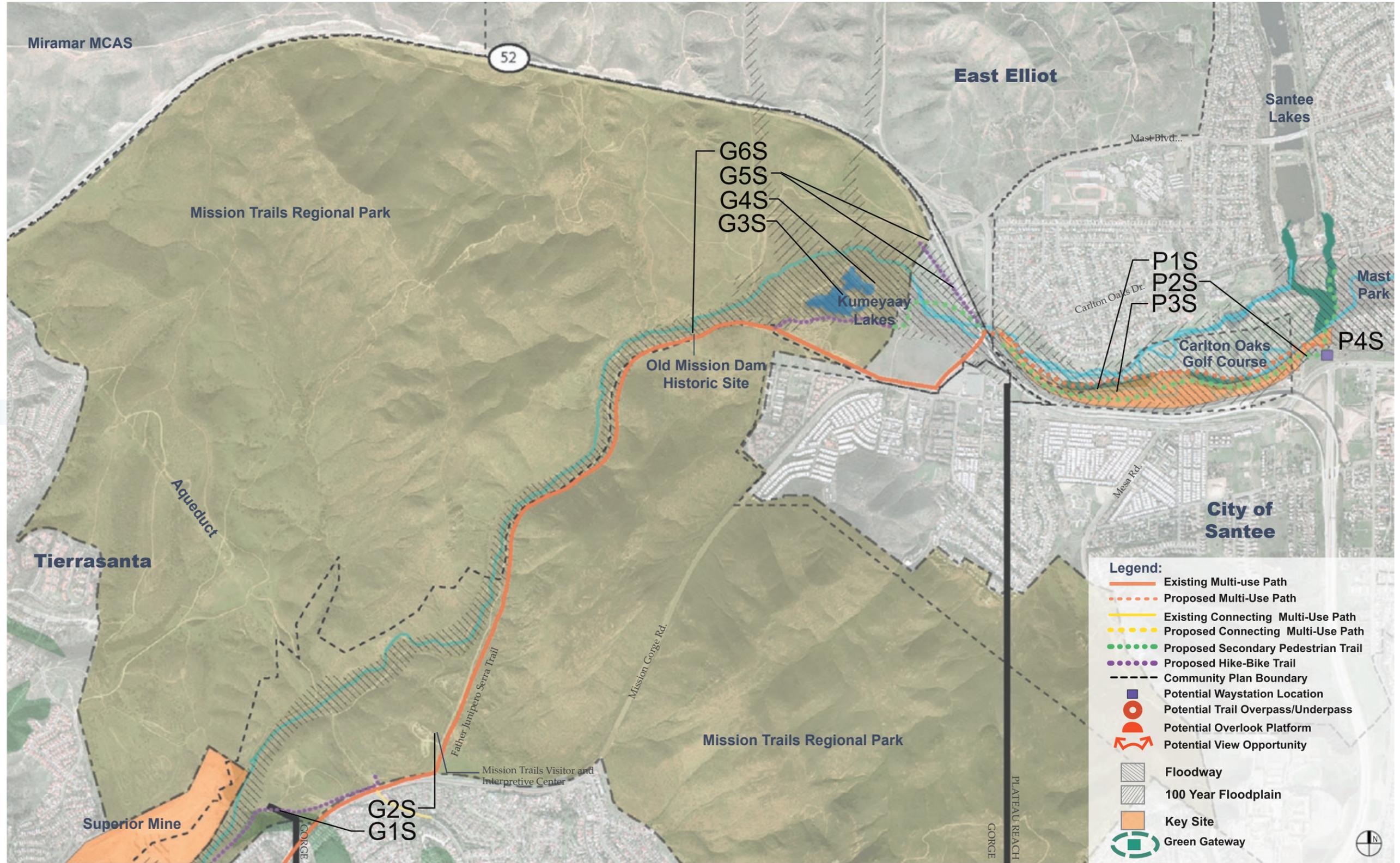
There is potential for the golf course to accommodate a trail on its southern edge near the river; this possibility should be explored when the Carlton Oaks Golf Course lease comes due for renewal. Land currently not used as golf course should be negotiated out of the lease to be for trail and open space. The long term potential for this area to evolve to become part of the San Diego River Park should also be considered. Redesigning the golf course to be more sensitive to the hydrology of the river and creating habitat corridors are ways in which the course may accommodate multiple user groups.

Key Points

- Critical location for connecting the City of San Diego segment of the San Diego River Park with Santee and upstream segments of the Park.
- River corridor is channelized, narrow and constrained on the south side of the golf course. Open space corridor will provide adequate width to re-contour the river channel. Improved channel should allow increased river length and meander, increased riparian habitat, and run-off buffering at the golf course.
- An open space corridor that follows the 100 year floodway alignment is recommended, with trail corridor/buffer adjacent to golf course.
- Connection under SR-52 is necessary to achieve continuity of San Diego River Park, and to connect trail with City of Santee's Mast Park.
- Build upon vegetation management projects already underway.



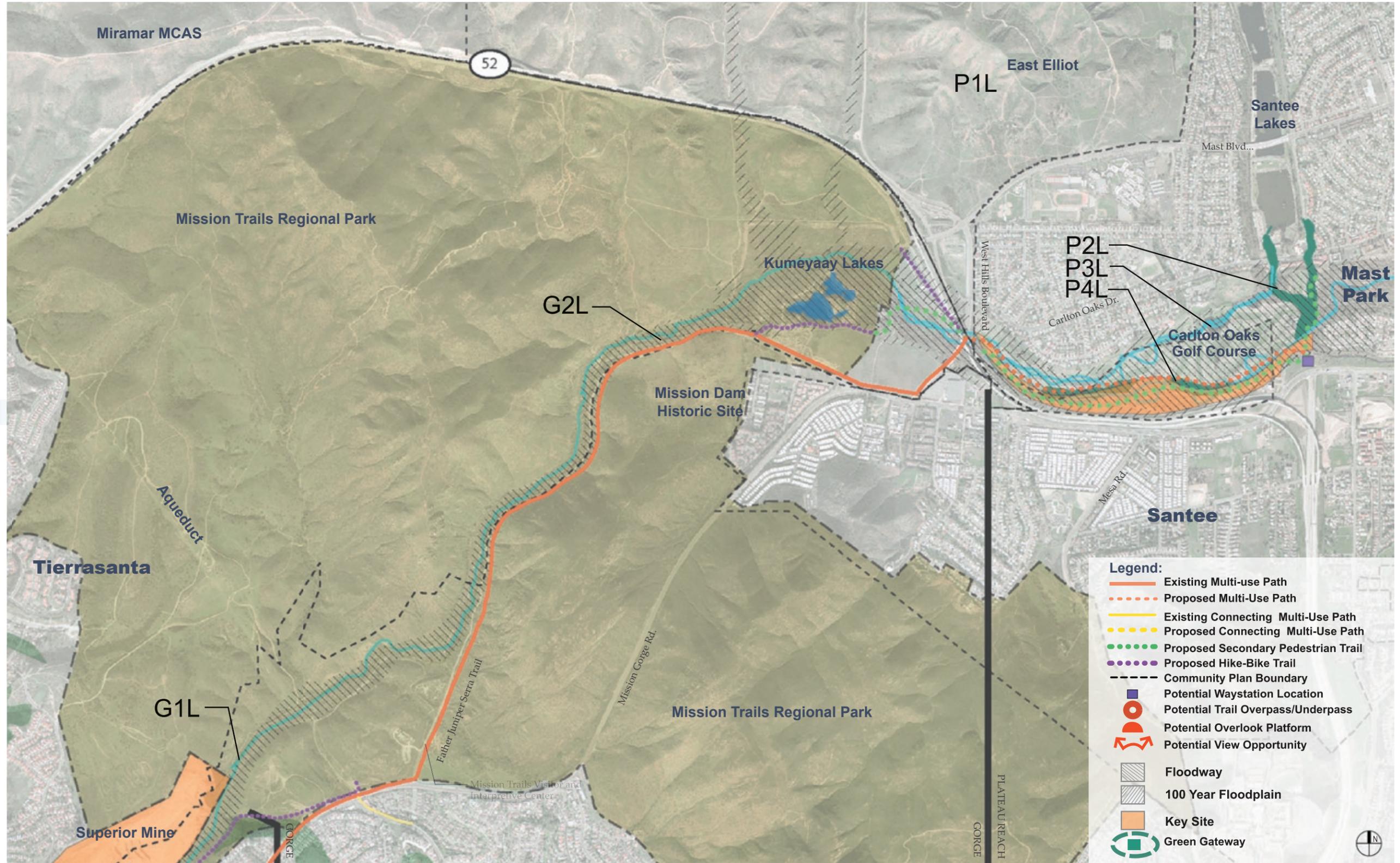
Cottonwood Gallery and secondary stream channel on Carlton Oaks Golf Course



KEYNOTE	RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION	BENEFITS				
			HYDROLOGY	ECOLOGY	RECREATION	EDUCATION	
Short Term - Gorge							
G1S	Support Mission Trails Regional Park efforts to create a continuous trail system and identify potential connections between the San Diego River Park Trail and existing hike/bike trails in MTRP.	Continue dialogue with Mission Trails Regional Park Master Plan and San Diego Bicycle Master Plan to identify potential alignments within Park and along Mission Gorge Road.	●		●		Executive Summary
G2S	Support existing and proposed interpretation of the river and history of the park at Mission Trails Visitor and Interpretive Center.	Continue dialogue with Mission Trails Regional Park Master Plan and Citizens Advisory Committee.				●	
G3S	Support existing interpretation of the river and the history of valley at campground and Kumeyaay lakes.	Continue dialogue with Mission Trails Regional Park Master Plan and Citizens Advisory Committee.				●	
G4S	Support the implementation of the Kumeyaay Lakes Dredging and Berm Restoration Capital Improvement Project.	Continue dialogue with Mission Trails Regional Park Master Plan and Citizens Advisory Committee.	●	●		●	Introduction
G5S	Create an unpaved hike/bike segment of the San Diego River Park Trail between MTRP at the MTRP East Fortuna trail head and the proposed multi-use path segment on the south edge of Carlton Oaks Golf Course. Connect the trail to Father Junipero Serra Trail following West Hills Parkway and Mission Gorge Road.	Coordinate with Mission Trails Regional Park Master Plan, citizens advisory committee, private land owners and appropriate agencies to identify specific trail alignment, establish easements and means of implementation.	●		●	●	Principles
G6S	Support the implementation of the Old Mission Dam Dredging Capital Improvement Project.	Continue dialogue with Mission Trails Regional Park Master Plan and Citizens Advisory Committee.	●	●		●	
Short Term - Plateau							
P1S	Create San Diego River Park Trail segment along south edge of Carlton Oaks Golf Course and improve native vegetation and habitat along proposed trail corridor.	Coordinate with appropriate agencies, community groups and land owners to identify potential trail alignment adjacent to golf course. Initiate dialogue with Caltrans and golf course owners to identify potential alignment and methods to create trail connection under SR-52 and West Hills Boulevard.			●		Recommendations
P2S	Create historic interpretation zone.	Install signage, interpretive kiosks and furnishings providing information about the San Diego River Valley and its importance to the settlement of the valley as well as the natural systems and ecology of the region. Implement as part of the trail development.			●	●	
P3S	Capitalize on existing tree galleries in golf course to create buffer along river and remove exotic vegetation from river corridor.	Initiate dialogue with golf course owners and City of San Diego to explore potential to evolve golf course edge toward native plant species and to develop a vegetation management plan.		●		●	Design Guidelines
P4S	Create San Diego River Park Trail head, as a gateway to San Diego at Carlton Oaks Golf Course. Coordinate with City of Santee to create habitat and trail connection to Santee Lakes and to Mast Park.	Initiate dialogue with City of Santee planners, Padre Dam Municipal Water District, golf course owners and City of San Diego to identify potential trail alignment, vegetation changes, and kiosk/trail head location. Coordinate with improvements proposed by Santee Lakes Master Plan.		●	●		

Implementation

Appendices



KEYNOTE	RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION	BENEFITS			
			HYDROLOGY	ECOLOGY	RECREATION	EDUCATION
Long Term - Gorge						
G1L	Collaborate with Mission Trails Regional Park to create waystation at edge of Mission Trails Regional Park with interpretive information.	Install signage, interpretive kiosk and furnishings with implementation of San Diego River Park Trail segment as part of the Superior Mine redevelopment.			●	●
G2L	Continue to support maintenance of the Old Mission Dam dredging. This project may need to recur in the future on a regular basis.	Explore the potential to develop a low impact approach to sediment removal that will allow small amounts of sediment to be reintroduced into the river system downstream to invigorate sediment transport process.	●			●
Long Term - Plateau						
P1L	Explore potential to connect with new open space to north and east.	Monitor future action related to land acquisition and explore opportunities to create wildlife habitat, trail linkages under or over SR-52 to East Elliot and interpretation of San Diego River Valley history.	●	●	●	●
P2L	If golf course use were to change in the future, entire site should be preserved for natural open space with a neighborhood scale park as a gateway to the San Diego River Park.	Monitor future action related to potential land use change.	●	●	●	
P3L	Integrate secondary stream channel through golf course with main San Diego River channel and create buffer. Expand native vegetation through golf course for wildlife habitat and to increase filtration to improve water quality.	Initiate dialogue with Carlton Oaks Golf Course to identify methods to modify golf course to be more environmentally compatible with river corridor.	●	●		
P4L	Explore potential to realign some golf holes to eliminate dike, recreate stream meander, realign multi-use trails and expand native wildlife habitat. Consider a new concept for the golf course as a links or target course that is substantially native vegetation.	Initiate dialogue with appropriate agencies, community/special interest groups and Carlton Oaks Golf Course to explore potential changes to course.	●	●	●	●

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