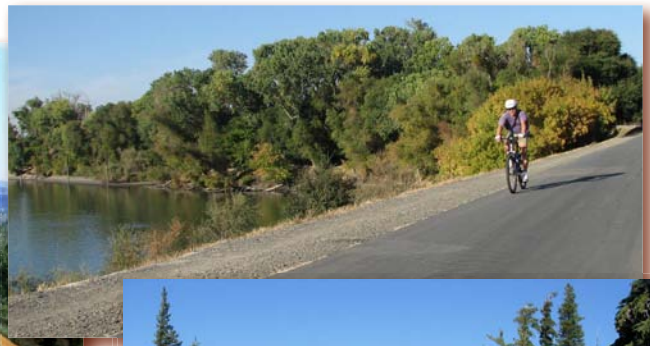
CALIFORNIA RECREATIONAL TRAILS PLAN

Providing Vision and Direction for California Trails



Progress Report

Submitted to the Legislature 2009

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California State Parks
Planning Division
Statewide Trails Section
www.parks.ca.gov/trails/trailsplan

Message from the Director

Above: Director Ruth Coleman
Cover photos, clockwise from left:
Rim of the Valley Trail,
courtesy Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy
San Gabriel River Trail, courtesy Dan Slater
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. The increasing population and desire for trails are increasing pressures on the agencies charged with their planning, maintenance and management.

As leaders in training, 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 two California Recreational Trails Committee public meetings and a workshop at the 2008 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 and enhance resources directed towards these recreation facilities.

A detailed version of this report can be viewed and downloaded from our Statewide Trails website at 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

Ruth Coleman, Director

California State Parks

California Recreational Trails Plan Progress Report

What is the California Recreational Trails Plan? The California Recreational Trails Plan serves as a guide to trail management agencies on a number of topics, including but not limited to the benefits of trails to California's changing demographics, how to acquire funding, methods of effective stewardship and how to participate in multi-use cooperation. The plan assesses the present and future demand of trail-oriented recreation uses and recommends an integrated system of trail routes to serve California. Preparation of a recreational trails plan for California was directed by the legislature as an element of the California Recreational Trails Act (PRC section 2070 - 5077.8).

Why prepare a progress report? The first California Recreational Trails Plan was completed in 1978 and updated in 2002. A copy of this plan can be viewed or downloaded from www.parks.ca.gov/trails. The California Recreational Trails Act, in PRC section 5070.7, requires that a report describing progress in carrying out the Recreational Trails Plan be prepared and submitted to the Legislature every two years.

Why is the Plan important? Many local agencies see the importance of trail systems to the physical and mental health of the people they serve. The development of a trail management process and system is often new to local trail providers, so the California Recreational Trails plan acts as a guide to the elements of such a system through the Goals and Action Guidelines identified. Aligning a trail or trail system with the Recreational Trails Plan often improves opportunities to receive grant funding for projects consistent with this plan. The California Trail Corridors identified as the Statewide Trail System also provide local and regional trail management agencies with the potential to add or connect to this statewide trail network.

Tahoe Rim Trail

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For more information, see: www.parks.ca.gov/trails/trailsplan

Goals Progress

Plan goals and their current status

Funding. ***Develop adequate and stable funding for planning, acquisition, development and management of trails.*** Federal transportation funding, California State Parks, state conservancies, and non-profit organizations have been the primary sources of construction funding; however, future funding is uncertain. Maintenance funding is inadequate in some areas of the state.

Bay Area Ridge Trail

Trails Inventory. ***Prepare regional and statewide inventories of existing, planned, and potential trails.*** Some counties and the National Park Service have trail inventories underway. Volunteer inventories and for-profit websites offer a patchwork of trail information. Unfortunately, trail information available on the web currently is inconsistent and sometimes lacks accurate information that would make trails safer and more accessible.

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 local governments are incorporating trails into their planning activities, especially in regards to new communities and multi-use open space corridors, but some local General Plans still do not include trail planning within their Open Space or Circulation Elements.

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.*** The well-attended annual California Trails and Greenways Conference, now in its 24th year, offers workshops and sessions on collaborative trail advocacy, planning, funding, design and permitting. This conference facilitates cooperative relations among trail and open space advocates and agency staff.

Santa Ana River Trail

Trail Research. ***Promote research that documents trail usage, environmental impacts and trail-based recreational trends and identifies future issues and needs.*** National and some local governments, as well as special interest groups, have conducted trail related research and published studies. The National Trails Training Partnership has many resources available online. California trail use trends are being measured through State Parks surveys, but other research priorities have not been set in a comprehensive manner.

Statewide Trail Stewardship. ***Promote adequate design, construction, relocation, and maintenance of trails in order to optimize public access and resource conservation.*** California State Parks' nationally-recognized trail training programs are attended by agencies and land managers throughout the state. Local and state funding for training is sometimes inadequate, because some agencies are not able to take advantage of this or other training opportunities.

Santa Ana River Trail

Encouraging Public Use of Trails. ***Encourage public use of and support for trails programs throughout California.*** A proliferation of websites now offer on- and off-road hiking and biking information. California State Parks offers information and maps for 150 hiking trails within state parks.

Trail Accessibility. ***Provide trail users with easily accessible trails and accurate information on trail locations and conditions.*** Many public land managers have instituted accessible trail renovation programs to increase the miles of trails accessible to people with mobility challenges. Limited information on trail conditions is usually obtainable by telephone to the responsible agency, but accurate web-based information about trail locations and conditions on public lands is limited.

Multi-use Cooperation. ***Provide the maximum opportunities for the public use of trails by encouraging the appropriate expansion of multi-use trails.*** California State Parks has implemented a Trail Use Change Process that will assist land managers in evaluating the multi-use potential of existing limited-access trails. Many user groups promote multi-use trail safety and etiquette guidelines. Multi-modal road and trail studies of open space lands may reveal opportunities for expansion of recreation for multiple users.

Private Property Owners. ***Work to identify and resolve conflicts between property owners and trail users and advocates.*** Indemnification policies and tax incentives have been implemented in some areas to encourage private property owners to allow limited public access to their lands. Education and community-building exercises to reduce conflict between trail advocates and property owners may improve access without impacting property rights.

Tahoe Rim Trail

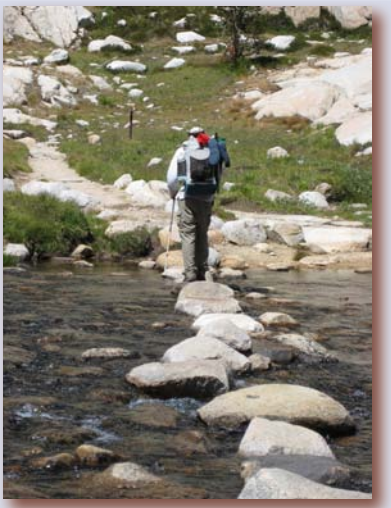
Trails Program Leadership. ***The Department's Statewide Trails Office will continue its guidance and leadership roles in promoting the advancement of trails and trails programs throughout California.*** The Statewide Trails Office has been working with agencies statewide promoting trails programs, assisting with technical assistance workshops, and supporting the California Recreational Trails Committee and the California Trails & Greenways Conference.

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.*** California State Parks is currently working with four counties to document the status of the California Riding and Hiking Trail in those regions. The potential for local ownership and/or management is being examined to promote continued use of the trail.

California Trail Corridor Progress

Trail descriptions and current status

California Coastal Trail, Point Lobos State Reserve



Pacific Crest Trail

San Joaquin River Trail

1 **California Coastal Trail.** ***Managed by the California Coastal Conservancy.*** Half of this 1,150-mile trail along the California coastline is now open to the public. Many regional trails and river greenways connect to this jewel of the California Coast.

2 **California Desert Trail.** ***Managed by the Desert Trail Association.*** The California Desert 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.*** Eighty percent of this trail's 130 miles is on existing dirt roads. It travels through lower elevation areas in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties.

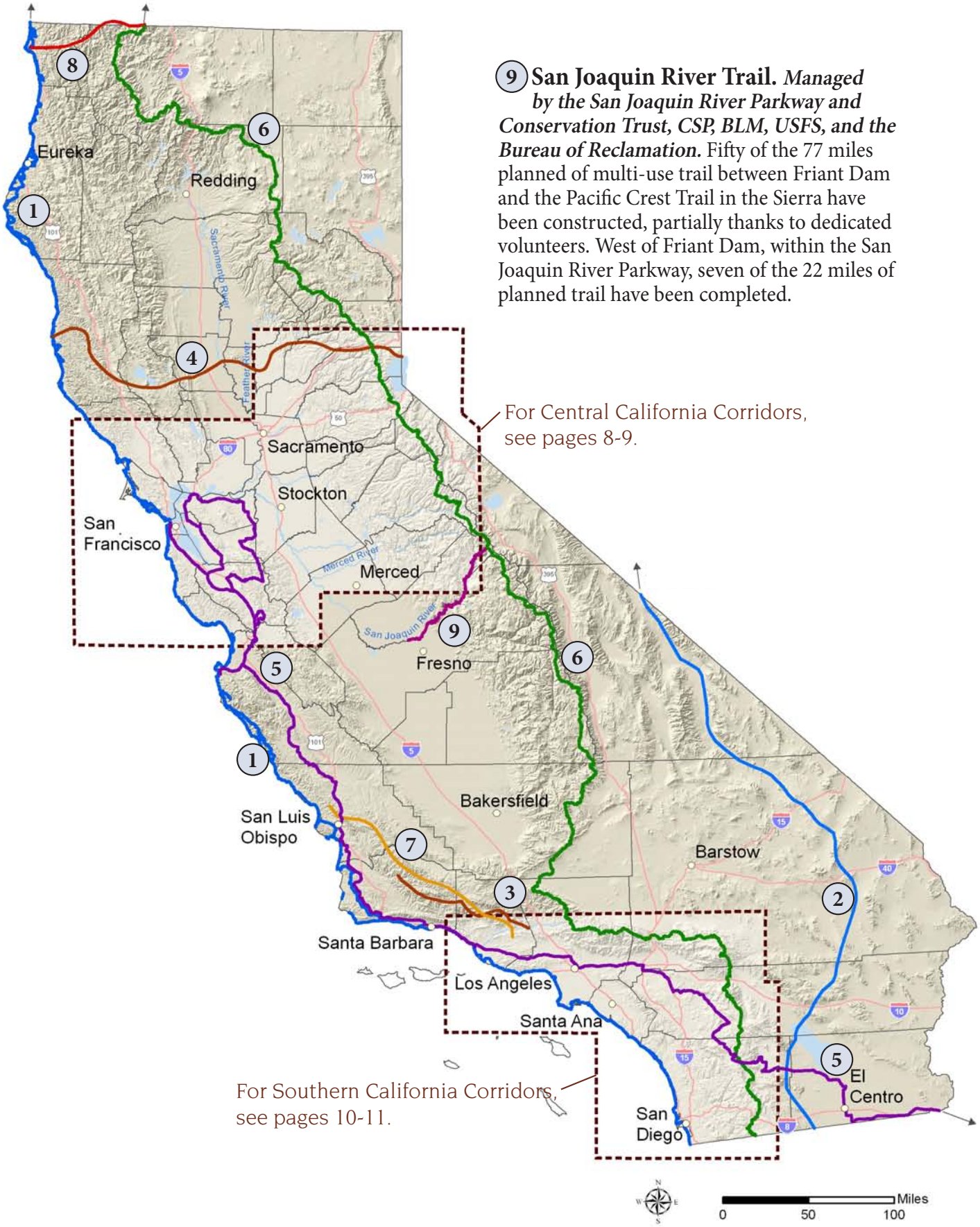
4 **Cross California Ecological Corridor.** ***No current manager.*** The route for this trail is only roughly planned at present. This trail is envisioned as a heritage corridor generally following Highway 20.

5 **Juan Bautista De Anza National Historic Trail.** ***Managed by the National Park Service.*** This 900-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. This trail links the significant historic routes of the expedition. Portions of the corridor are shared with other regional trails.

6 **Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail.** ***Managed by the US Forest Service.*** This trail is one of only three national border-to-border trails in the United States. The 1,692 miles of non-motorized hiking and equestrian trail extend along the Sierra Nevada and Cascade Mountains from Mexico to Canada and are entirely open to the public. Improvements and realignments continue to improve the user experience.

7 **Questa to Sespe Trail.** ***Managed by the Los Padres National Forest.*** This 250-mile 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.

8 **Redwood Coast to Crest Trail.** ***No current manager.*** No major progress on this trail plan has been made since 2002. This trail is planned to be approximately 120 miles long from Crescent City on the coast to the Pacific Crest Trail in the Cascade Mountains.



For Central California Corridors, see pages 8-9.

For Southern California Corridors, see pages 10-11.

9 San Joaquin River Trail. ***Managed by the San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust, CSP, BLM, USFS, and the Bureau of Reclamation.*** Fifty of the 77 miles planned of multi-use trail between Friant Dam and the Pacific Crest Trail in the Sierra have been constructed, partially thanks to dedicated volunteers. West of Friant Dam, within the San Joaquin River Parkway, seven of the 22 miles of planned trail have been completed.

Central California Trail Corridor Progress

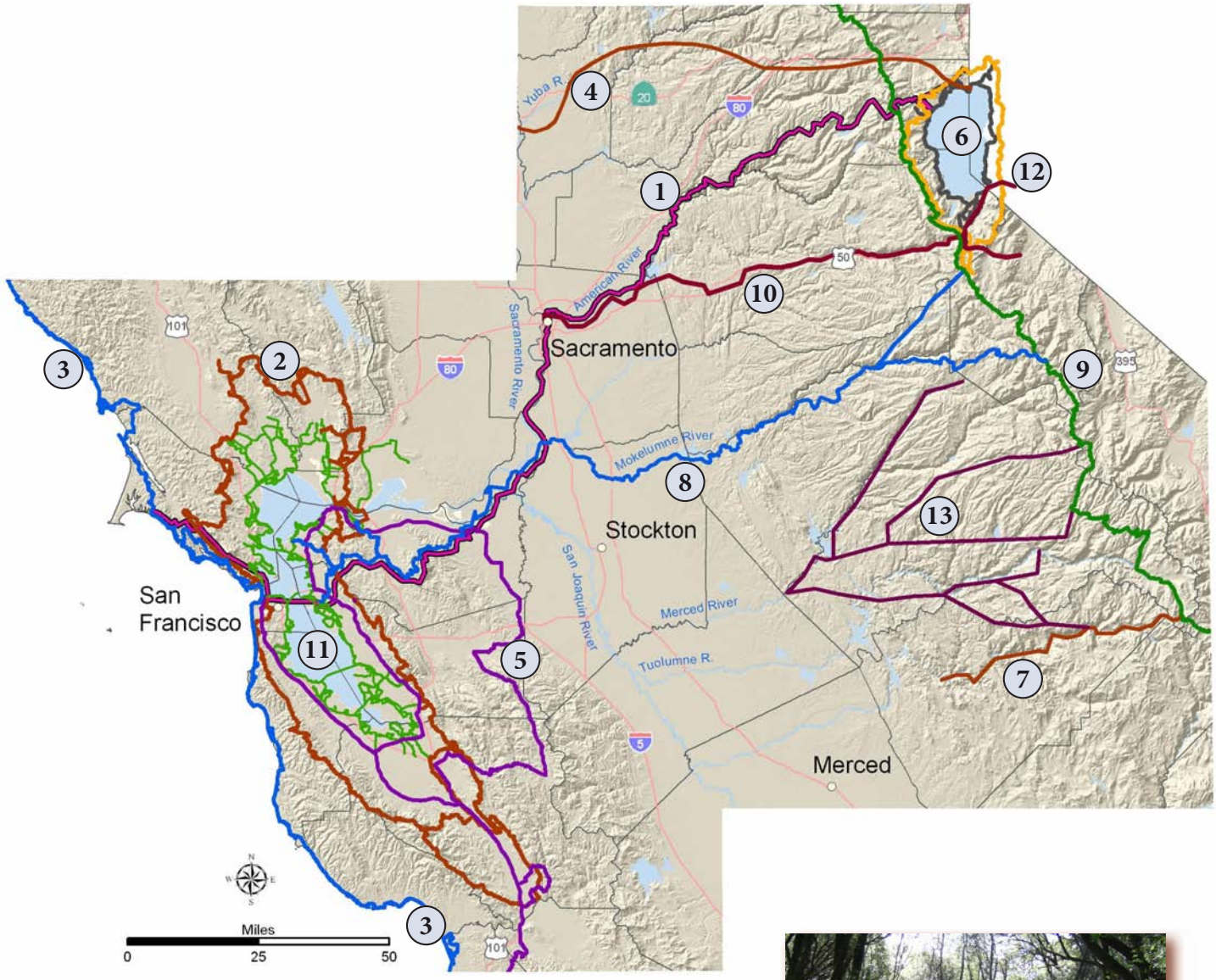
Trail descriptions and current status

American Discovery Trail, courtesy visitfolsom.com

Mokelumne Coast to Crest Trail

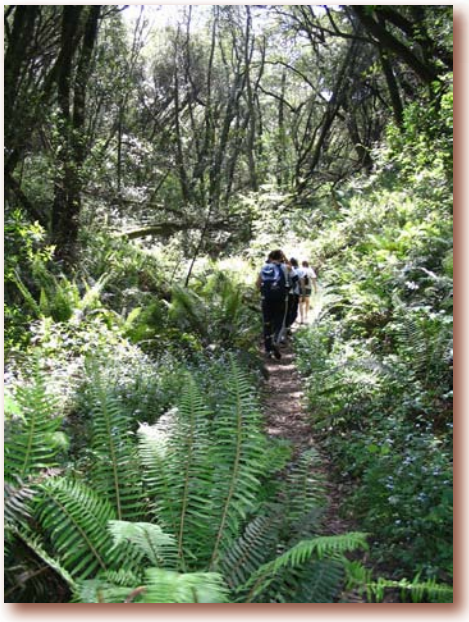
Lake Tahoe Bikeway 2000

1. **American Discovery Trail.** ***Managed by the American Discovery Trail Society.*** This 6,800-mile coast-to-coast trail incorporates existing trails and roads across America, through small towns, big cities, National Parks, Forests and State Parks. 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.
2. **Bay Area Ridge Trail.** ***Managed by the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council.*** Currently, 310 of the 550 planned miles are open to the public. This 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.
3. **California Coastal Trail.** See page 6.
4. **Cross California Ecological Corridor.** See page 6.
5. **Juan Bautista De Anza National Historic Trail.** See page 6.
6. **Lake Tahoe Bikeway 2000.** ***Managed by various local communities.*** This planned system of bike trails and bike routes will utilize existing roads and trails within Lake Tahoe Basin communities. Approximately 80% of the bike system is completed and open for use.
7. **Merced River Trail.** ***Partially managed by BLM.*** No formal plan or management strategy currently exist for this trail. This potential 28-mile trail would follow a historic railroad bed which goes 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 Utilities District and USFS, BLM and PG&E.*** About 112 of 330 planned miles of this non-motorized, multi-user 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.
9. **Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail.** See page 6.
10. **Pony Express National Historic Trail.** ***Managed by the National Park Service.*** This Heritage Corridor and Auto Tour Route 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 trail encompasses nine Bay Area counties, 47 cities, and local government and private properties. Of the 500 miles planned, 290 miles are open to the public. It 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 completed 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.

13 Tuolumne Complex. ***No current manager.*** The Tuolumne Complex of trails has high potential but is not yet completed as a regional system. Some segments are listed as proposed trails in the 2002 Tuolumne County Recreation Master Plan. Most of these trails are former railroad beds that go through properties of the Stanislaus National Forest, BLM, CSP, Tuolumne County and private individuals. They exist in various levels of management and disrepair and are not publicly promoted, but are regarded as "unofficial" trails in the various jurisdictions and communities they traverse.



Bay Area Ridge Trail

Southern California Trail Corridor Progress

Trail descriptions and current status

California Riding and Hiking Trail, San Diego County

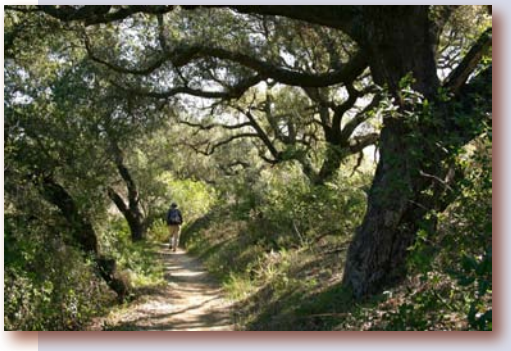
1 **Backbone Trail.** ***Managed by NPS's Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.*** This 63-mile trail is a patchwork of fire roads and existing and new trails. It provides unique opportunities for long-distance trail use for citizens within the metropolitan Los Angeles area.

2 **California Coastal Trail.** See page 6.

3 **Condor Trail.** See page 7.

4 **Juan Bautista De Anza National Historic Trail.** See page 6.

5 **Los Angeles River Trail.** ***Managed by the Los Angeles County Departments of Public Works and Parks and Recreation.*** This planned 33-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.



Backbone Trail

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

7 **Rim of the Valley Trail.** ***Managed by NPS's Santa Monica Mountains Recreation Area.*** About 93 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. Federally funded planning for open space associated with the trail will begin soon.

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 55 miles. Approximately 20 miles of completed trail were damaged in the 2007 fires in San Diego County.

San Dieguito River Park Trail, courtesy John Holloway

9 **San Gabriel River Trail.** ***Managed by the Los Angeles County Departments of Public Works and Parks and Recreation.*** This 38-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.

10 **Santa Ana River Trail.** ***Managed by the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority.*** This trail connects with 22 other regional 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.

11 Santa Clara River Trail (Parkway). ***Managed by the California Coastal Conservancy.*** Planning for the trail within the Parkway is in the preliminary stage. The trail has potential to encompass the entire 65-mile length of the Santa Clara River from the headwaters near Acton to the mouth at the McGrath State Beach. A major completed portion of the trail is a rail trail in the city of Santa Clarita, California. The State Coastal Conservancy is very active in funding 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 110-mile east-west route in San Diego County that connects many cities and unincorporated communities. Nearly 70% 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, this multi-jurisdictional trail has no lead agency at this time. 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 and into the Cleveland National Forest.

14 Questa to Sespe Trail. See page 7.

San Gabriel River Trail, courtesy Dan Slater

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California Coastal Trail, courtesy Coastwalk

San Gabriel River Trail, courtesy Dan Slater

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- Ruth Coleman, California State Parks Director

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