

# BRIDLE PATH MOUNTAIN PARK RESTORATION, MAINTENANCE AND DEVELOPMENT PROTOCOL

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Produced for the Bridle Path Homeowners Association  
Simi Valley, CA

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This protocol is pending approval by the Board of Directors.

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## **1. OVERVIEW**

### **1.1. Purpose**

This document establishes guidelines and practices which are to be followed by the current and future Bridle Path Board of Directors or any other governing bodies of the Bridle Path, the members of the HOA and all individuals and corporations contracted to work in the MP.

The protocol complies with all applicable federal, state and local laws and ordinances. This guideline will allow us to maintain the property while concurrently ensuring its preservation and integrity along with all native species living within its boundaries and those adjacent to the property.

### **1.2. Mission Statement**

1.2.1. The mission of the Bridle Path Mountain Park Restoration, Maintenance and Development Protocol (BPMPP) is to protect and permanently preserve the Mountain Park in its entirety while simultaneously allowing safe and stable access for equestrians and pedestrians.

1.2.2. This document is intended to specify proper procedure for restoration, maintenance and development of the MP so it will remain pristine, intact and viable to all the native species that inhabit it and a treasure for residents and guests to enjoy.

1.2.3. Driven by the permaculture ideal, this protocol will allow the site to direct us so that it may evolve naturally ensuring that this open space area becomes a legacy for future generations.

1.2.4. The restoration portion of the protocol adheres to the guidelines stipulated by the Department of Fish and Game (as well as other governing agencies) and outlines mitigations directed specifically toward restoring the damaged areas of the MP back to their original pristine condition.

1.2.5. The maintenance portion of the protocol further solidifies the goal that the MP will be left intact for future generations. It does so by outlining ecologically sound and minimally invasive guidelines and practices which are to be followed by the board or other governing body, the members of the HOA and all individuals and corporations contracted to work in the MP.

1.2.6. The development portion of the protocol includes plans which are intended to make the MP a more “user-friendly” area for residents and surrounding community members. By increasing participation and educational opportunities we hope to promote awareness about the intrinsic value of the MP and of open space, native habitats and native inhabitants which are quickly disappearing from California. By doing so, we hope that future generations will value and protect the MP as we do.

1.2.7. The residents of the Bridle Path have been entrusted with the task of preserving this diverse and vital open space area. Only if it is maintained properly

will it remain pristine and viable to the survival of all the species that inhabit it. Our mission is to uphold a strong and steadfast commitment to this invaluable task.

### **1.3. The Property**

#### 1.3.1. Description

The Bridle Path Mountain Park is 1700 acres of intact open space (non-developable land) located south of Meander Drive and Rambling Road and east of Long Canyon. (Thomas Guide Plate 498 A7) in Simi Valley, County of Ventura, California It is part of the Bridle Path Equestrian residential neighborhood (630 homes) and it is immediately adjacent to the homes there. The Mountain Park also includes the strip of land between Nonchalant and Mellow Lane and the strip of land between Mellow Lane and Azure Hills that stretches to Sunnydale. All arenas are located within the Mountain Park.

#### 1.3.2. History

The vision of Richard Doremus and his partners when developing this land was to create an equestrian community similar to one he had experienced in Huntington Beach in the 1960's. He purchased 2600 acres of ranchland from the Montgomery and Kelly families in the early 1970's and was adamant about not developing but preserving a large chunk of open space for the enjoyment of the residents. Today this property is adjacent to (and a part of) the California Wildlife Corridor as are neighboring open space areas including Challenger Park (Rancho-Simi Parks District), China Flats (National Park Services) and Conejo Open Space (Conejo Open Space Conservancy Agency).

### **1.4. Philosophy**

1.4.1. After much research it has been determined that the *least invasive methods* are the best practice in order to:

- maintain the integrity of the MP trails
- prevent erosion
- minimize soil disturbance (thus preventing further introduction of non-native species)
- provide safe footing for both horses and pedestrians.

1.4.2. It is of the utmost importance to employ skilled and qualified personnel including, but not limited to, a tractor operator (preferably an Operating Engineer) who has prior experience in maintaining trails in an open space system, and who is familiar with slope gradient, erosion control and environmental law. To do otherwise would only result in destruction of this land as experience has shown.

### **1.5. Independent Evaluation**

1.5.1. It is also advisable to have our BPMP evaluated by a consultant specializing in Badlands Topography in order to:

- determine the most effective and cost-efficient way to repair and/or restore deteriorating trails
- determine if the trails are safe for passage.

Areas in need of repair could then go out for bid according to GPS location.

### **1.6. Solid Waste Implementation Plan**

1.6.1. A Solid Waste Implementation Plan (SWIP) shall also be put into place in the BPMP. This plan is required in California and is designed to minimize the impacts of erosion.

## **2. JURISDICTION**

### **2.1. Federal And State Agencies**

Federal and State Agencies that have jurisdiction over the MP are:

- Department of Fish and Game (DFG)
- Fish and Wildlife
- Army Corps of Engineers
- California Coastal Commission
- Regional Water Quality Board

### **2.2. Guidelines**

The guidelines and laws we are required to abide by are:

- Streambed Alteration Agreement # 1600-2204-0348-R5 (SAA)
- Water Quality Act
- California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)
- Federal Migratory Bird Act

### **2.3. Bridle Path Homeowners Association**

2.3.1. The Bridle Path Board of Directors maintain immediate jurisdiction over the mountain park. Each term a Mountain Park Director is appointed to oversee all issues related to the Mountain Park. Support is given to the Director by the Mountain Park Maintenance and Restoration Committee (MPMRC) members. The duties of the Director include but are not limited to :

- Mountain Park Security
- Trail inspection
- Mountain Park inspection
- Maintenance
- Trash removal
- Coordination and supervision of trail maintenance by contractors
- Coordination and supervision of Volunteer Workdays
- Maintenance and housing of BP Truck
- Compliance with Fish & Game Streambed Alteration Agreement

2.3.2. The MP Director is the primary liaison between the board of directors and all regulatory and private agencies and contractors working in the Mountain Park.

2.3.3. The MP Director is also responsible for reporting the status of violations and recommended actions to the board on a regular basis.

### **3. RESTORATION**

#### **3.1 Streambed Alteration Agreement**

3.1.1. The restoration portion of this protocol adheres to the guidelines stipulated by the Department of Fish and Game Streambed Alteration Agreement signed by the Bridle Path Board of Directors in 2005 and outlines mitigations directed specifically toward the restoration of certain damaged areas of the MP back to their original pristine condition.

- Degraded slopes must be stabilized. Where possible gabions and/or water bars should be placed to help prevent erosion. Gabions may not be placed in creeks (use mattresses or fabrics instead). Gabions must be filled with rock and dirt so as not to entrap reptiles. If necessary stakes will be driven into slopes to stabilize them long enough for revegetation.
- The lower stream crossing adjacent to the Meander Arena gate and just west of the junction of Bus Canyon and Dog Alley trails is subject to bank failure and will be abandoned and permanently blocked from pedestrian and equestrian traffic. (This is a Blue Line stream.) All washed out culverts and other construction materials must be removed. The banks are to be restored and stabilized prior to the rainy season to prevent further erosion (in accordance with SAA #18 noted on page 4.) Planting and seeding is a viable solution, however in the event that the plants do not become established, it is recommended that a non-erodible material (such as coconut fiber or jute matting) be used to prevent erosion. Any mitigation of this area must be approved by DFG.
- Any disturbed portion of a stream channel must be restored to its original condition. Debris must be removed and slopes stabilized.
- In areas that slope downstream where the soil has been disturbed, all materials that could potentially flow downstream must be removed prior to inundation or flooding.
- In areas where normal re-vegetation is not an option, native plants appropriate to the habitat must be used to replant. All restorative planting efforts will be overseen by a specialist familiar with native plant species. In order to determine if the plantings have been successful, an expected growth timeline is noted in the SAA on pages 5 and 6 which also requires that the native species be planted after the first rain between October 1st and February 1st in order to promote growth and maximize the survival rate of the plants. Irrigation shall be provided by BPHOA as needed.
- Non-native vegetation shall be removed and properly disposed of. This includes (but is not limited to) Pampas Grass, Castor Bean, Tamarisk, Tree Tobacco, and Giant Cane. This vegetation should be removed by hand or by hand operated power tools.
- Slough left from the last grading project along stream edges must be removed to prevent entering streambed.

- All restorative efforts shall use the “least invasive” methods possible.

#### **4. MAINTENANCE**

The maintenance portion of the protocol further solidifies the goal that the MP will be left intact for future generations. It does so by outlining ecologically sound and minimally invasive guidelines and practices which are to be followed by the Bridle Path BOD or other governing body, the members of the HOA and all individuals and corporations contracted to work in the MP.

##### **4.1. Mountain Park Trails**

- Trails will be cleared and repaired annually tri-annually. The first pass will be to mow only. The second and third passes are to clear the trails or roads only. Water bars will be created, repaired or maintained as needed. If necessary gabions shall be placed to help prevent erosion. If in fact grading must be done to repair damaged or washed out roads or trails, DFG must be notified. The trails that are large enough for tractor maintenance are: Bus Canyon, Windy Gap, Wildcat Ridge, Dog Alley, Trough Canyon, Punchbowl, and the lower section of Montgomery Fire Road. The upper section up to Gate 5 is maintained annually by Ventura County Fire Department. Depending on conditions, the upper section may need mowing during the first tractor pass. All other trails are too narrow for tractor access and will be maintained by hand.
- No tractor work is allowed within 10 feet of the top of the bank of any streambed or the outside of the drip line of the riparian zone, whichever is widest.
- Trails in the BPMP shall NOT be graded or cleared in excess of 8 feet in width.
- Vegetation shall not be removed or intentionally damaged beyond the 8 foot limit (unless it is non-native – see section 4.3.3 Removal of Non-Native Species.) Special care must be taken not to remove vegetation from sloped areas.
- Any required fire clearance shall be done *outside* of riparian areas.
- This report recommends the purchase of a tractor and a wood chipper to assist with the maintenance and to provide mulch that can be used to prevent non-natives from becoming prolific.
- Regular gate maintenance will be done quarterly and include lubrication of mechanical parts and checking the electronic system. Dirt build-up and brush are to be removed from the tracks. Maintenance will be done monthly during periods of heavy rain by regularly scheduled contractors.

## **4.2. Specific Areas**

### **4.2.1. Blue Line Stream Equestrian Crossing At The Junction Of Bus Canyon And Dog Alley**

Only the upper trail is to be graded and maintained so that horses and hikers may cross through the creek channel. This report recommends that a flatbed railroad car be brought in to stretch across the length of the upper crossing to serve as a bridge. This would eliminate the need for annual re-grading in the streambed and would allow passage for maintenance vehicles and emergency vehicles during fire and storm conditions. It would also allow safe passage for equestrians and pedestrians.

## **4.3. Streams And Riparian Areas**

### **4.3.1. General Guidelines**

- Any work to be done near a stream must be done during the dry season between May 1st and December 1st when the stream is NOT actively flowing. This includes trail clearance.
- No work is allowed within 10 feet of the top of the bank of any streambed or the outside of the drip line of the riparian zone, whichever is widest.
- Excess fill (spoil storage) is not to be left close to a stream or on a bank where it can wash back into the stream OR where it might cover aquatic or riparian vegetation.
- Removal of vegetation from a streambed is prohibited.
- All trash and debris must be removed from the streambed.
- Vegetation may not be stockpiled in the streambed or on its banks. This material should be placed in upland areas to provide wildlife habitat and so that it does not wash into the stream during the rainy season.

### **4.3.2. Native Vegetation**

- Native vegetation shall not be removed except with the permission of the DFG.
- Areas that have been stripped or exposed shall be allowed to revegetate.
- Oak trees, California Black Walnut trees, or Sycamore trees that are damaged or removed during maintenance operations shall be replaced in kind at a 10:1 ratio.
- Valley Oak trees damaged or removed during maintenance operations shall be replaced in kind at a 15:1 ratio.
- Elderberry, cottonwood, alders and willows damaged or removed during maintenance shall be replaced at a 5:1 ratio.
- No signs shall be nailed into any of the above named trees.

### **4.3.3. Removal Of Non-Native Vegetation**

Non-native vegetation shall be removed and properly disposed of no less than bi-annually (as per the DFG Streambed Alteration Agreement). If necessary this will

occur more often. This includes (but is not limited to) Pampas Grass, Castor Bean, Tamarisk, Tree Tobacco, and Giant Cane. This vegetation should be removed by hand or by hand operated power tools. Herbicides may not be applied in the Mountain Park.

#### 4.3.4. Removal Of Fallen Trees, Rocks And Debris

- Trails shall be kept clear of debris, rocks and large boulders. Downed trees that are blocking any of the trails/roads will be harvested and lumber shall be reused for benches, tie rails, etc., or be chipped for mulch. Downed trees that are not blocking any trails will be left where they lay.
- It is recommended that the board contract with a tree service to maintain the trees along bridle paths, around arenas and along trails on a continual basis.

#### 4.4. Protection For Wildlife And Aquatic Species

No one may harm or harass any wildlife in the BPMP. Every effort will be made to relocate any species that becomes a nuisance or danger to the residents. If necessary, professional help will be obtained.

##### 4.4.1. Nesting and or Breeding Birds

- No construction or vegetation removal shall occur between March 1st and September 15th.
- Prior to commencing any construction, a qualified biologist will survey the area for breeding and nesting habitat.

##### 4.4.2. Threatened or Endangered Species

- If any threatened or endangered species are observed, then no work is to be done between March 1st and September 15th.
- Should a Threatened or Endangered species be sighted within 500 feet of the work area, the DFG must be contacted immediately to request an onsite inspection and determine whether or not the work should continue.

##### 4.4.3. Raptors

- Prior to commencing any construction between January 31st and September 1st, a qualified biologist will survey the property to be sure there is no nesting occurring.
- Should an active nest be discovered, no construction work will be permitted within 500 feet of the site until the young have fledged and become independent.

#### 4.5. Arenas

- The Arena and Trails Committed has been sanctioned by the BPHOA board supervise the arenas. This committee will oversee and make recommendations to the board regarding all maintenance and restoration needed to keep arenas in working order.
- Arenas and round pens are to be dragged on a weekly basis using a harrow.

- The arenas will be inspected monthly to be sure that the trees are trimmed high enough so as not to interfere with riders.
- The arenas will be re-graded and footing rebuilt according to the schedule in the reserve study but at a minimum every 10 years.
- It is recommended that additional electrical power and lights be installed in the arenas at First Street and at the Sunnydale Arena.
- Watering is to be done regularly. The Arena and Trails Committee will oversee the adjustment of timers based on weather conditions and will check sprinkler systems on a regular basis.
- No manure cleaned from any trail or arenas shall be deposited within 150 feet from any creek (DFG Code Section 5652)

#### **4.6. Water Troughs And Automatic Waterers**

- The trough located at under the large Oak tree at the base of the slope at Gate 4 is to contain gold fish (for mosquito larvae elimination) at all times. It is to be filled at all times and should be cleaned out once every month.
- The troughs located in the Windy Gap are spring fed and should be checked quarterly by the MPMRC.

#### **4.7. Trash Removal**

Trash is to be hauled out every other week by the Mountain Park Committee or by volunteers.

#### **4.8. Bathrooms**

- Septic Tank shall be emptied at least once a year or more often depending on the number of events taking place at the first street arena.
- Antibacterial soap is not allowed in the bathrooms.

#### **4.9. Regulations For Workers Entering The Mountain Park**

- All necessary permits must be obtained and submitted to the DFG prior to beginning any construction work in the MP.
- BPHOA must notify the DFG in writing at least 5 (five) days prior to beginning any construction activities and at least 5 days prior to completion.
- All workers (including tractor operators) must be given a copy of the most recent SAA prior to beginning any work in the MP, and all workers must abide by these guidelines. A copy of the agreement must be available on site at all times (as per DFG).
- All workers shall comply with current litter and pollution laws.
- All materials hazardous to aquatic life (including but not limited to raw cement, asphalt, petroleum products, etc.) must be prevented from contaminating the soil and or entering the waters in the MP and state of California.
- Water containing mud, silt or any other pollutant may not be dumped into any waterway or placed in a location subject to high storm flow.

- Rock, gravel and other materials may not be imported to or removed from streambeds or banks unless agreed to in the SAA.
- All workers must remove (and properly dispose of) any trash or debris created while working on site. No trash or debris is to be left in the MP at any time.
- Violation of these terms could result in termination of the worker or contract. Any contract entered into by the BOD or other governing body for work done in the MP shall include this information.

#### **4.10. Equipment Guidelines For The Mountain Park**

- A skip loader shall be used to complete the necessary work in the mountain park in order to minimize impact. If grading is necessary, nothing larger than a D-4 shall be used.
- A rubber-tired Skiploader with a gannon box or Drag Tractor with a gannon and a small blade should be used to efficiently grade, create proper drainage, mow, groom and repair most of the trails. Rubber tires will not churn up the soil and rocks, are less intrusive and more cost effective.
- A small dozer (such as a D-2, D-3, D-4 Caterpillar or a John Deere 350) would be appropriate for use in areas with heavy damage such as wash-outs.
- Some areas with severe trail damage will require the use of larger equipment. An excavator or a backhoe should be used in these specific locations to move dirt and place heavy boulders in areas that need to be supported.
- No vehicle or equipment is to be driven in or operated in any wetted areas or water covered portions of a stream, or where wetland or riparian vegetation or aquatic organisms may be destroyed (unless approval has been granted by the DFG.)
- Equipment is to be checked and maintained daily in order to prevent hazardous material leaks which could potentially be dangerous to wildlife and aquatic life.
- No equipment maintenance shall be done within or near any stream channel.
- No equipment will be operated or parked within the drip line of any oak tree. Protective fencing shall be installed outside the drip line to prevent compaction of the root zone.
- No equipment shall be stored within 50 feet of any stream bed. Should a spill occur accidentally, the DFG is to be notified and clean up is to commence immediately with DFG acting as a consultant.

**5. DEVELOPMENT (unfinished at the time of this publication)**

## 6. REFERENCE LIST

Streambed Alteration Agreement # 1600-2004-0348-R5, California Department of Fish and Game

*Species List from Conservation Element* - City of Thousand Oaks Planning Department

*Oak Tree Handbook*, City of Thousand Oaks

*Trail Specifications Handbook*, Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency (COSCA)

*Handbook for Forest and Ranch Roads*, California Department of Forestry

*Sunset Western Garden Book*, Kathleen Brenzel and Ed Norris, Sunset Publishing Corporation, 2001.

*Gaia's garden: A Guide to Home-Scale Permaculture* - Toby Hemenway, Chelsea

Green Publishing Company, 2000.

*Permaculture: A Designers' Manual*, Bill Mollison, Tagari Publications, 1997.

*Dynamic Accumulators List*, Source Unknown, from Earthflow Design Works Course, 2006.

*Reserve Study*, Bridle Path Homeowners Association

## 7. GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

BOD	Board of Directors
BP	Bridle Path
BPHOA	Bridle Path Homeowners Association
BPMP	Bridle Path Mountain Park
BPMPP	Bridle Path Mountain Park Protocol
CC&R	Codes, Covenants and Restrictions
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
COSCA	Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency
DFG	Department of Fish and Game
HOA	Homeowners Association
MP	Mountain Park
MPMRC	Mountain Park Maintenance and Restoration Committee
SAA	Streambed Alteration Agreement
SWIP	Solid Waste Implementation Plan

# SPECIES LIST