

The Marin County Open Space District (MCOSD) owns and manages 34 open space preserves across Marin County. The preserves are managed for both natural resource protection and recreation. They encompass some of the most ecologically sensitive resources within the county, and they are enjoyed by many thousands of county residents and visitors annually. In addition, the MCOSD manages more than 250 miles of roads and trails that traverse these lands. The roads and trails provide public access and recreational opportunities for visitors. The roads also provide emergency access for MCOSD vehicles as well as fire and rescue personnel. They also provide access for the maintenance of utilities, including those owned by the Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD).

When the MCOSD acquired the lands that now encompass the preserves, it inherited many miles of existing roads and trails. Many of roads and trails were neither designed nor constructed for recreational purposes, but rather for logging, agriculture, railroads, firebreaks, and telephone and power lines. Many roads and trails were inappropriately sited and configured. As a result many of the existing roads and trails may not be sustainable in the long term. Further, over the past decades, the MCOSD has seen an increase in visitor use, which has led to the need for increased maintenance and improvement of the roads and trails.

Managing the existing road and trail network to ensure resource protection and minimal environmental impact, improve visitor safety, and maintain access for enforcement, maintenance, and emergency vehicles consumes a large share of MCOSD's staff time and budget. The MCOSD faces an array of challenges, including: allocation of increasingly limited financial resources to a growing list of projects; increasing demand for recreation on a limited land base with sensitive resources; environmental maintenance; safety concerns; protection of important natural resources; fulfillment of regulatory requirements; people building illegal trails; the creation of many miles of "social trails" that crisscross the lands; and expressions of concern about visitor use conflict.

1.1 Purpose and Goals of the Road and Trail Management Plan

Until now, the MCOSD had never developed a comprehensive plan to guide the management and maintenance of these facilities. The purpose of this Road and Trail Management Plan (RTMP) is to have one comprehensive document to guide the future use and management of all of the roads and trails on MCOSD lands.

The primary goals of the RTMP are:

1. To establish and maintain a sustainable system of roads and trails that can be maintained by the MCOSD using a set of design and management standards.
2. To reduce the environmental impact of roads and trails on sensitive resources, habitats, riparian areas, and special status plant and animal species.
3. To revise visitor use policies for roads and trails that result in improved visitor experience.

Moving forward, the MCOSD will use a decision-making tool - contained in this plan - to determine which road and trail projects will be undertaken on an annual and multiyear basis. The decision-making tool will address all road and trail projects, including those roads and trails that would be decommissioned, rerouted, or constructed. The MCOSD will use the standards identified in this plan to guide road and trail maintenance, upgrading, decommissioning, rerouting, and construction; and a set of Best Management Practices (BMP) identified in this plan that define how the work will be completed. The BMPs include environmental protection measures. This RTMP will guide the MCOSD's work for the next twenty years.

1.2 Guiding Principles for MCOSD Activities

HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

To assist the reader in understanding the format of this RTMP, and how each Chapter is related to the others, the following summary has been included.

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