

MEMORANDUM

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JOEL ROJAS, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

DATE: APRIL 8, 2015

SUBJECT: INTER-JURISDICTIONAL TRAIL MATTERS BETWEEN THE CITY OF RANCHO PALOS VERDES AND NEIGHBORING CITIES

Project Manager: Ara Mihranian, Deputy Director of Community Development

DISCUSSION

On January 15, 2013, the City Council, in response to public concerns regarding the loss of trail connections between neighboring jurisdictions, directed Staff to monitor and provide quarterly reports to the Council on inter-jurisdictional trail matters. The following is the first quarterly report on inter-jurisdictional trail matters for 2015. It should be noted that since the last report in September 2015, no significant changes have occurred to the status of trails connecting to neighboring cities as reported below, with the exception of the much anticipated opening of the Martingale Trail between the City and Rolling Hills that connects to the Willow Springs Trail in Rolling Hills.

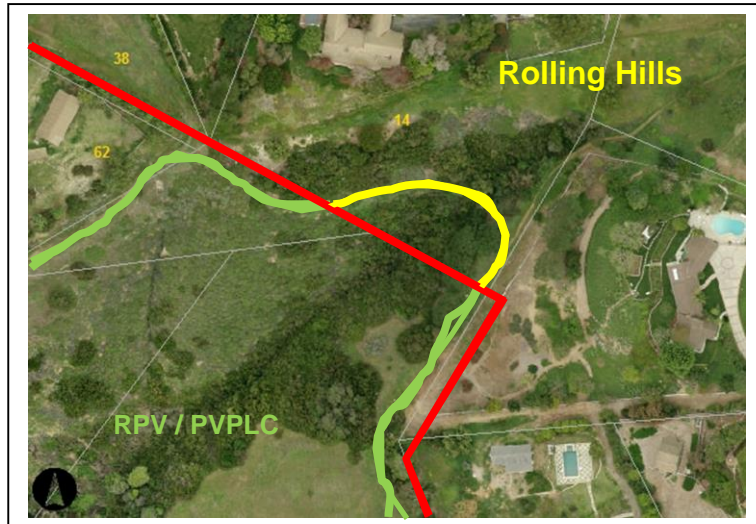
Rolling Hills

The following is updated information, if applicable, involving trail connectivity issues with the City of Rolling Hills:

1. Fire Station Trail and Rim Trail Connection (Portuguese Bend Reserve)

In August 2011, it was reported that Ms. Cathy Nichols, the owner of property traversed by an unofficial trail historically used by the public as a link between the Rim and Fires Stations Trails in the Portuguese Bend Reserve, closed the trail across her property (shown in yellow on the following page). Ms. Nichols and the Rolling Hills Community Association informed the City and the PVPLC that the trail

traversing her private property would be physically closed with barriers. To help alleviate the vandalism of the barriers she installed at her property line, the City installed private property signs and signs notifying trail users of the trail closure. Additionally, the rangers increased their presence in the area.

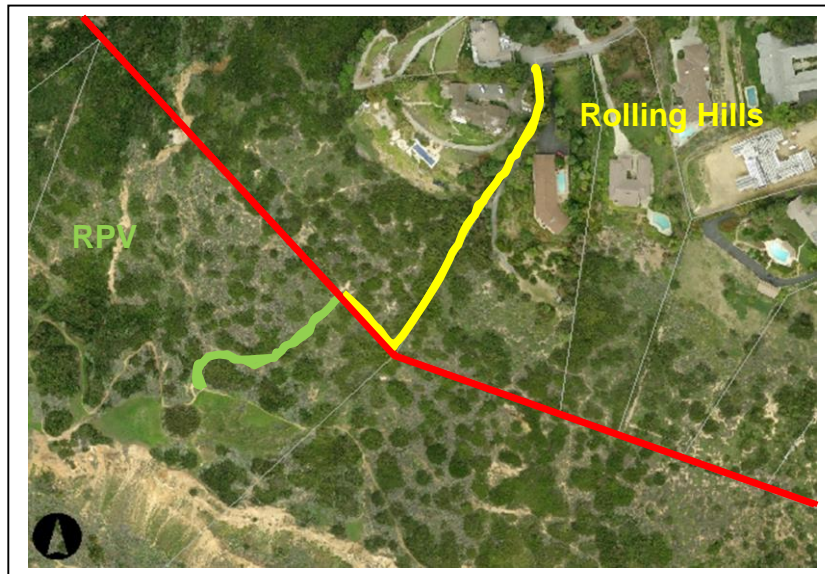


In response to Ms. Nichols trail closure, City and PVPLC Staff began to explore alternative trail routes within the Preserve boundary limits. Ultimately, it was concluded that due to the steep topography and the surrounding protected habitat, a trail connection could not be created without impacts to protected habitat, significant grading or construction of a bridge. Thus, at this time the trail connection traversing Ms. Nichols' property remains closed. A trail connection on City-owned property in the Portuguese Bend Reserve has not been created but has been identified as a high priority project for the PVPLC when funding sources, such as grants, become available.

The City and the PVPLC continue to monitor unauthorized trail construction activity in this area through sensitive habitat. Furthermore, the City continues to replace the vandalized "no trespassing" signs in this area. Lastly, Ms. Nichols continues to express no interest in realigning the trail nor re-opening the trail on her property.

2. Packsaddle Trail (Forrestal Reserve)

In 2001, when the trails map was approved by the City Council for the Forrestal Reserve, the Council approved trails plan included the Packsaddle Trail that leads up to the City boundary with Rolling Hills (see image below). At that time, it was the City's understanding that an access easement existed in the City of Rolling Hills that led to Packsaddle Road East in the City of Rolling Hills (presumed access easement shown in yellow in the image below).



Subsequently, the City of Rolling Hills has closed the trail at the City's boundary line because trail users coming from the Forrestal Reserve were not obtaining appropriate permission from the City of Rolling Hills and walking into the backyards of private property. During a meeting with Rolling Hills Officials, it was expressed that neither the City of Rolling Hills nor its Community Association intends to provide and maintain trail easement access between Packsaddle Road East and the Packsaddle Trail in the Forrestal Reserve. In fact, City Staff was told that a fence is planned to be installed along the property line to protect the adjacent private property owners from trespassers. Rolling Hills officials requested that the City close the Packsaddle Trail, remove the trail from the City's Trails Map, and install signs indicating that the public trail ends at the Mariposa Trail junction. At the time, Staff did not intend to close the Packsaddle Trail nor remove the trail from the Preserve's Trails Maps because of its historic use as a trail by the community as cited in the CTP. However, the City installed signs notifying trail users that the Packsaddle Trail ends and does not provide through access.

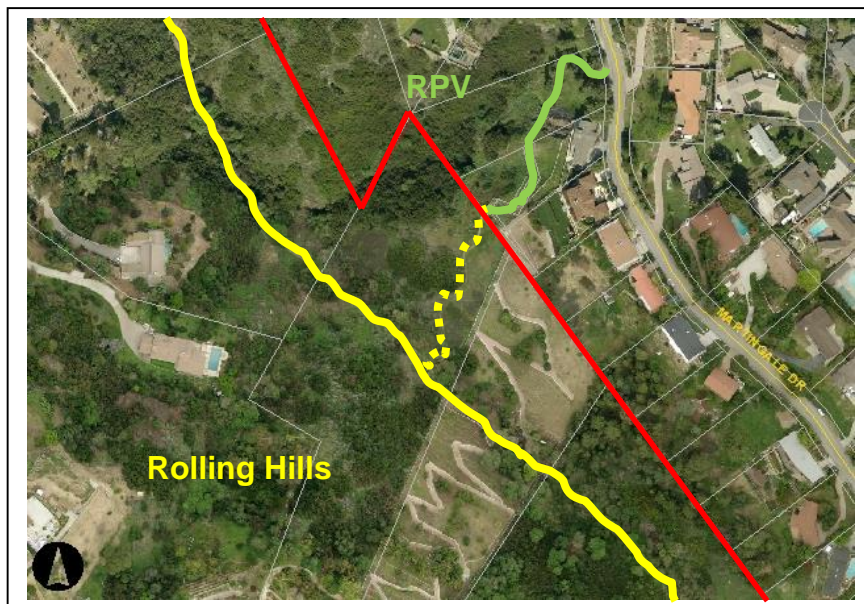
Over the past several months, Staff has received numerous calls from the family residing at the end of Packsaddle Road East in Rolling Hills (see map above) where the City's trail terminates at their rear yard property line. According to the family, a significant amount of trails users from the City's Forrestal Reserve are trespassing across their property to exit the trail system, using improvements in their backyard including their spa, and peering through windows along the side of their home. The residents on numerous occasions have informed the trail users that they are trespassing only to be ignored and, at times, belligerently spoken to. The family is asking the City to reconsider closing the Packsaddle trail because it

does not connect to other trails in the City of Rolling Hills and invites trespassers onto their property.

In light of this information, and the fact that the Preserve, over the past few years, is experiencing a higher number of trail users who are unfamiliar with the City's trails system, or chose to access unpermitted areas for a different type of trail experience, the City and the PVPLC agreed to close this trail segment that does not connect to another trail, and will be making such a recommendation to the City Council at a future meeting. City Staff continues to work closely with the impacted property owner in Rolling Hills.

3. Martingale Trail

The City's Martingale Trail (shown as a green solid line) extends from the City-owned Martingale Park (next to Martingale Drive) to the boundary line with the City of Rolling Hills, at which point the City's public trail terminates. However historically, trail users (particularly equestrians) have continued past the City boundary traversing private property in Rolling Hills to connect to the Willow Springs Trail (shown in solid yellow line) in the City of Rolling Hills. In January 2013, the City was contacted by the property owner in Rolling Hills whose property is traversed by trail users (Mrs. Cheryl Marcz) indicating her interest in donating a portion of her property to the City of Rancho Palos Verdes as a way to eliminate her liability concerns caused by trespassers onto her property. Seeing this as an opportunity to complete the existing gap between the City's Martingale Trail and Rolling Hills' Willow Spring trail, as last reported, City Staff met with the involved parties in June 2013 to discuss the details of the offer. City Staff expressed an interest in Mrs. Marcz' offer but wanted to make sure that the land offer would guarantee public access from PRV to the Willow Springs Trail in the City of Rolling Hills. Rolling Hills officials indicated that the matter would need to be considered by the Community Association Board.



City Staff was notified in September 2013 that the Community Association Board reached an agreement with Mrs. Marcz and the Association will have a dedicated public trail easement across her property that will connect to the City's Martingale Trail.

Late last year, the Community Association contacted City Staff indicating that the trail easement had been recorded and the trail opened at the City boundary line completing the connection to the Willow Springs Trail. Now that the trail easement had been dedicated, the trail is part of the RHCA trail system and is accessible by the public provided that appropriate permits are obtained from the Community Association (the typical protocol for use of trails in the City of Rolling Hills). The trail is for pedestrian and equestrian use only (as with all trails in the City of Rolling Hills), and a three-rail fence has been constructed along Mrs. Marcz' property line with an opening for trail access.

It should be noted that the City's segment of the Martingale Trail is need of some repair that will be completed by Public Works in the coming weeks.

Since this trail matter has now been resolved, it will no longer be reported on unless things change.

4. Library Trail

The City's Conceptual Trails Plan (CTP) identifies the Library Trail (shown as a green solid line below) as an existing, but undedicated trail, that begins at the City boundary line with Rolling Hills in the Colt Canyon area above the Miraleste Library and extends eastward to Palos Verdes Drive East, at which point the trail crosses the roadway at the existing school crosswalk. In order to be formally considered a City public trail, the CTP identifies the need for easements from various private property owners, including the Library District.



The City was contacted last summer by a Boy Scout about constructing the City's segment of the Library Trail as his Eagle Scout project. The Scout was informed that in order for the trail work to occur, permission would have to be obtained from each respective property owner (the library district and three private property owners) and appropriate trail easements would have to be secured to absolve the property owners from any liability resulting from the public's use of the trail. The Boy Scout engaged some of the property owners, including the Library District, who expressed an interest in formalizing this trail segment. Unfortunately, due to time constraints associated with completing his Eagle Scout project, the Scout decided to pursue a different project with the City of Rolling Hills Estates. However, as a result of being contacted, the Library Board of Trustees considered whether to dedicate a trail easement to the City at its September 19th meeting.

City Staff attended the September 19th meeting at which time the Board unanimously agreed to 1) not allow the Eagle Scout trail improvement project to proceed citing safety concerns related with the trail interface with the library driveway and parking area; and 2) to defer any decision on granting an easement to the City of Rancho Palos Verdes until a time the City requests such an easement, and that no future easement be granted to the City unless concerns with safety and maintenance can be addressed by the City, along with protecting possible future driveway and parking improvements. The Board added that in order to consider granting some form of a trail easement or agreement to the City, the other three owners of the property the trail traverses should also be in agreement to grant a similar easement to the City otherwise the trail could not be implemented as described in the CTP.

Recently, the City has received a few development applications (new homes and a lot split for two new homes) in this neighborhood. One of the proposed homes is located on vacant property at 29073 PVDE, which is one of the three privately owned properties abutting the proposed Library Trail route. Staff recently met with the new property owner to discuss, among other things, the possibility of dedicating a trail easement across the subject property to accommodate the Library Trail. The new property owner did not express an interest in dedicating such a trail easement.

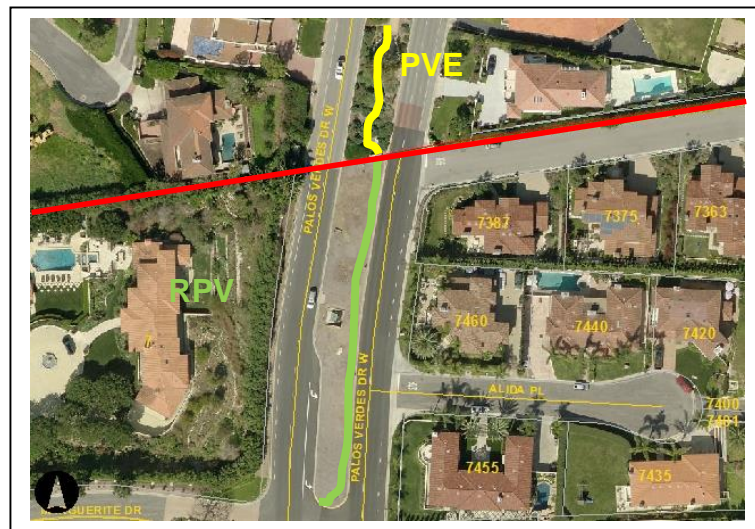
In light of this information including the Board's decision, Staff is not going to pursue implementation of the Library Trail at this time and instead focus on other trail implementation projects in the City.

Rolling Hills Estates

At this time, there are no trail connectivity issues to report with the City of Rolling Hills Estates.

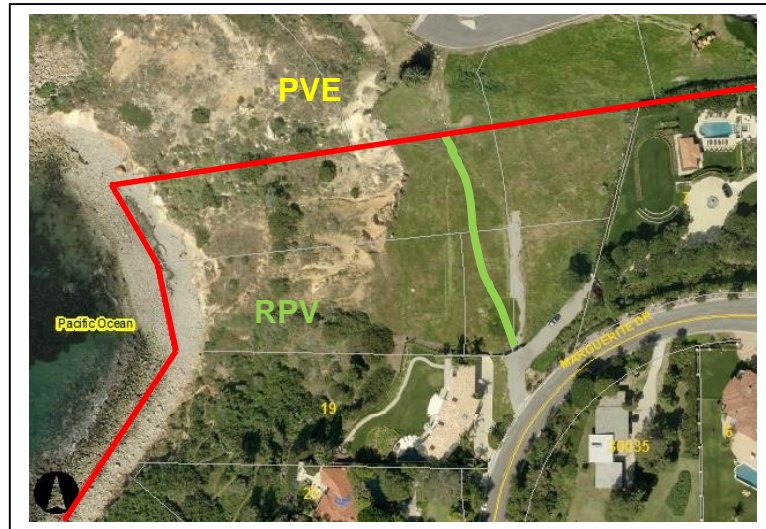
Palos Verdes Estates

It was last reported that there are currently two trail connectivity issues with the City of Palos Verdes Estates. The first involves the City's segment of the California Coastal Trail (CCT), which was recently completed. To date, City Staff continues to work with Staff from the City of Palos Verdes Estates to ensure that the City's segment of the CCT that will be constructed in the Palos Verdes Drive West roadway median (as an upcoming landscape median project) will connect to the existing trail in the City of Palos Verdes Estates' roadway median (see below).



The second trail matter involves a historically used trail connection between Marguerite Drive (RPV) and Paseo del Mar (PVE) that traverses vacant private property adjacent to 7 Marguerite in RPV (see image on the following page). According to the Coastal Commission, unpermitted fences were installed by the owners of the vacant property impeding public access that has been historically used between RPV and PVE. RPV Staff informed Coastal Commission Staff that the vacant property on which the fences are located is privately owned with no dedicated public trail easement on any portion of the property.

While Staff recognizes that there has been some historical use of the private property for trail access between the RPV and PVE, there is no record of any legal decision supporting any type of prescriptive easement over said property. Moreover, the City's approved Local Coastal Plan (LCP), Conceptual Trails Plan (CTP), Coast Vision Plan, or Coastal Trail does not designate any type of trail over the property. In contrast, the aforementioned City documents designate nearby Palos Verdes Drive West as the coastal trail route in that area of the City. Lastly, according to the City's approved LCP, the private property is not within any identified Visual Corridors.



Based on this information, City Staff informed Coastal Commission Staff that it did not intend to pursue any action against the property owner to reinstate a public trail that traverses their private property, and that if a public trail is desired by the Coastal Commission, that it would be the City's preference for the Coastal Commission to assume primary responsibility for resolving this matter and the alleged violation with the installation of the 6-foot tall chain link fencing. Thus, at this time, this trail matter is currently being pursued by the Coastal Commission and City Staff will continue to monitor this matter and update the Council.

Los Angeles County

As part of the San Ramon Stabilization Project, Staff is developing a trail that would create a much desired connection between Friendship Park and the San Ramon Reserve (a sub-area of the Palos Verdes Nature Preserve) without having to secure easements from another jurisdiction. This is because as part of this project, the County of Los Angeles agreed to give the City of Rancho Palos Verdes approximately 5 acres of land that will allow the City to construct a trail within the project area that will connect to an existing trail at Friendship Park, as roughly illustrated in the map on the following page.

Additionally, as part of this trail construction project overseen by Public Works, an overlook off the PVDE switchbacks has been built with boulder seating, a trash receptacle, and an interpretive panel telling the story of the San Ramon Storm Drain project.

