



San Diego Canyonlands  
3461 Euclid Avenue San Diego, CA 92105  
619-546-7707

# Juniper Canyon Action Plan

## I. INTRODUCTION

This document is a Canyon Action Plan, which documents Step 3 of the Canyon Enhancement Planning (CEP) process for Juniper Canyon (Community Engagement and Planning).

San Diego Canyonlands (SDCL) is a non-profit organization dedicated to restoration and preservation of San Diego's unique canyons and creeks. SDCL's **CEP process** uses a systems approach for improving our natural open spaces and integrating them within the fabric of the urban environment. The steps of the CEP process are the following:

1. **Friends Group Creation:** Establish/Enhance a knowledgeable Friends Group to provide local stewardship.
2. **Mapping and Analysis:** Create detailed maps of existing conditions for analysis and opportunities assessment.
3. **Community Engagement and Planning:** Assemble community stakeholders; conduct a series of stakeholder workshops for input; and create a **Canyon Action Plan** based on the maps generated in Step 2 that summarizes the enhancement opportunities, possible solutions to issues, and priorities.
4. **Plan Approval:** Build local support for the solutions identified in Step 3, including, as necessary, approval from San Diego planning groups, the City Open Space Division and the City Development Services Department; seek funding as needed to develop detailed planning documents, and obtain permits and/or California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance documents.
5. **Plan Implementation:** Implement the plans developed in Step 4. Where possible, use volunteers, collaborations, and partnerships, or, for major improvements, seek funding and implement when possible using professional labor such as staff, consultants and contractors.

This Juniper Canyon Action Plan is the outcome of the third step in the CEP process. Three Juniper Canyon community stakeholder meetings have been held on September 20, 2016, November 12, 2016, and June 17, 2017, with the last two being field visits to the canyon. Stakeholder ideas, priorities, concerns, and other comments were gathered during these meetings. Participants included Juniper Canyon friends, neighbors, Friedrick Manor HOA residents, City Rangers, and other canyon users and interested persons. Notes from the meetings were shared with participants and posted on the SDCL website at [www.sdcanyonlands.org/cep](http://www.sdcanyonlands.org/cep) (scroll down to Juniper Canyon). This Action Plan summarizes the information gathered during the stakeholder meetings and lays out the goals for Juniper Canyon that SDCL intends to present for approval in Step 4 of the CEP process.



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## **II. EXISTING CONDITIONS**

Juniper Canyon, part of the City of San Diego's open space system, is located within the North Park Community. Juniper is a multi-finger canyon that generally runs north-south. It is situated south of Interstate 8, west of Interstate 805, north of I-94, and east of 31st Street. A major finger canyon, sometimes referred to as Ivy Canyon, runs west of the main canyon almost to 31st St. Other fingers to the east are primarily privately owned. A canyon area that is separated from Juniper Canyon by Whaley Avenue to the south has been referred to by the City as 34th St. Canyon; this area is not included as part of this CEP process. Juniper Canyon is surrounded on all sides by residential development and St. Augustine High School is just to the north.

SDCL has mapped the existing conditions as follows:

- Action Plan Maps - Attachment A (North Juniper Canyon) and Attachment B (South Juniper Canyon)
  - Approved trails, unapproved trails, and utility access paths
  - Areas for potential new trails/trailheads and trail improvements
  - Land ownership, including possible encroachments into public land
  - Utilities (water, sewer, storm water conveyances)
  - Locations of invasive plant species identified during field trips
  - Areas prone to be used as encampments
- Geo-topological & Erosion Map (Attachment C)
  - Geological and topographical conditions
  - Sites where storm water erosion is excessive
  - View points
- Vegetation Communities Map (Attachment D)

The Action Plan maps include location call-outs that show the relationship of the proposed enhancements to the existing infrastructure, property ownership, and other social conditions. This "Socio-Infrastructure" Map, Geo-topological & Erosion Map, and the Vegetation Communities Map served as a basis for identifying site-specific action plans as described in Section III.

## **III. ACTION PLAN**

### **A. Local Stewardship**

The Juniper Canyon Friends group has periodically led stewardship of the canyon since the group was founded in November 2002. The City Rangers support and facilitate routine monthly volunteer events, thus the canyon has enjoyed steady, monthly stewardship over the years. SDCL will continue to provide assistance to the stewardship group.

### **B. Habitat**

Juniper Canyon has good quality habitat that is within the City's Multiple Habitat Planning Area (MHPA). The endangered California gnatcatcher has been observed in Juniper Canyon. Habitat restoration projects on City-owned land have been accomplished by Friends of Juniper Canyon and the



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City's Park and Recreation Department in the north section. Additional opportunities to improve the habitat value will be detailed in a separate Restoration Plan as part of Step 4 in the CEP process.

As part of a more comprehensive habitat enhancement approach, SDCL will develop an outreach and educational program to engage private property owners along the rim of the canyons. The goals of this campaign are to:

- Reduce the use and spread of highly invasive, non-native plants;
- Increase wildlife habitat values;
- Develop a native plant palette that is both compliant with City Brush Management Zone (BMZ) guidelines for fire defense objectives and reduces the need for maintenance within the BMZ;
- Provide information regarding the harmful effects of rat poison or other pesticides on birds of prey and other wildlife.

### **C. Trails**

The canyon trails are separated into two sections (North and South) by Juniper Street. The existing trails serve both as utility access roads and public access trails.

#### **NORTH:**

**Trailheads:** there are trailheads from Nutmeg Street, on the east side from the corner of Teresita & 34th Street, the west side from Laurel Street, and from Juniper Street.

**Approved trails:** The main trail is approved and runs from Nutmeg to Juniper Street. In the middle of the northern section, the trail is within the meandering, ephemeral stream and there are exposed cobbles from heavy rainfall and waterflow. The rest of the northern trail is in good condition for trail users.

**Unapproved trails/ Trail Opportunities:** There is an unapproved social trail near the Juniper Street trailhead, which appears to be associated with encampments. For the trailhead at Juniper Street, we recommend creating an opening in the guardrail to allow pedestrians to cross the street to the trailhead south of Juniper Street and include a painted pedestrian crosswalk (Attachment A, #12).

#### **SOUTH:**

**Trailheads:** there is a trailhead at the north end of South Juniper starting at the south side of Juniper Street.

**Approved trails:** The approved trail runs from Juniper Street to a dead end where a chain link fence has been installed at the Friedrich Manor Homeowners Association (HOA) private property line. The HOA is off of Whaley Avenue but this trail does not reach Whaley Avenue.

#### **Unapproved trails/ Trail Opportunities:**

The southern portion has several social trails leading to residential backyards. One opportunity is to steer canyon users to well-planned, official trails and minimize social trail use.

The stakeholders have discussed a new trail alignment that has been approved within the City's North Park Community Plan Update, adopted by the City on October 25 2016. This new trail would split off of



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the existing trail, and head west and up the slope to the Gregory Street Right of Way (ROW) (see South Juniper Canyon Action Plan Map (Attachment B, #15). It follows the Gregory St. ROW heading south and turns back to the east and heads downslope through City property in Ivy Canyon to the Fir St. ROW and to the cul-de-sac at Whaley Avenue. The alignment crosses an existing easement on the Friedrich Manor HOA property where the Fir St. ROW connects with Whaley Avenue (Attachment B, #19). The Friedrich Manor HOA Board has conditionally supported this new trail alignment if the City provides an amendment to the Fir Street ROW to allow only non-vehicle public access. The City has agreed to this stipulation.

There is also an unapproved social trail entry point on Ivy Street. This trail winds through Ivy Canyon, a finger canyon, connecting to Whaley Avenue south of Juniper Canyon. This Action Plan proposes to improve and enhance this Ivy Canyon social trail and establish it as an official trail (Attachment B, #18).

#### **D. Erosion**

Areas in need of erosion control are documented on the geo-topographical Conditions Map for Juniper Canyon (Attachment C). Erosion has occurred in the canyon stream, beyond what would naturally occur, due to hardscape and impermeable surfaces installed in the surrounding canyon watershed. This “hydro-modification” results in increased volume and velocity of storm water flows through the canyon and destabilizes the system. Streambanks are eroding causing loss of habitat, increased sediment in storm water and possible damage to trails and infrastructure. Sections of the canyon stream have been mapped that could be stabilized with native planting or bio-engineering strategies (See Attachment A, #6). There are highly eroded slopes and trail segments in Ivy Canyon including a storm drain failure that resulted in slope slumping off of Marlton Street. While the City has taken steps to stabilize this slope, a sustainable trail alignment needs to be planned and designed. SDCL will seek funding to hire a consultant to create a comprehensive erosion control plan to stabilize the stream, the trails, and the slopes as needed as part of Step 4 in the CEP process for Juniper Canyon.

#### **E. Encampments**

Stakeholders voiced concern about encampments which are illegal within the canyon. It was recognized that encampments occur in areas with or without trails but that trails also allow access for hikers, joggers, Rangers, and Police for monitoring and reporting illegal activities in the canyon. The action plans involve improving lines-of-site into areas that are attractive for encampments (Attachment A, #10).

#### **F. Encroachments**

When an illegal encroachment or significant, unapproved impact is discovered on City-owned open space property, San Diego Canyonlands will inform the City Open Space Division. While one location has been mapped as a “Possible Encroachment” in North Juniper Canyon (see Attachment A, a yellow dot below the Kalmia Right of Way) there are no confirmed encroachments reported to the City for Juniper Canyon.



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## **G. Views**

While the stakeholders considered opportunities for viewpoint amenities in cul-de-sacs and along the edges of the streets, there were no new viewpoint improvements proposed as part of this plan.

## **H. Utilities**

There are no specific recommendations for changes to utilities, or access to utilities, as part of this plan.

## **I. Priorities**

The enhancement opportunities for the North and South Juniper Canyon Action Plan are listed below with numbers that correspond to their locations on the maps (Attachments A and B).

The priority actions that SDCL will pursue are:

1. Creation of a detailed habitat restoration plan for submittal to the City Open Space Division for approval.
  - Include recommendations to immediately control highly invasive plants species.
  - As part of the restoration plan, SDCL will work to raise funds to hire a qualified Landscape Architect to recommend strategies to address areas of erosion and seek approval and funding for implementation of erosion control methods.
2. SDCL will work with the City Open Space Division to implement completion of the proposed new trail and pursue funding as needed for design, permitting, and construction.

## **J. Opportunities for Integration**

Juniper Canyon should be included in the Chollas Creek Regional Park because Juniper is within the Chollas Creek watershed and it would further collaborations toward comprehensive watershed restoration planning, as well as increase funding opportunities for enhancement projects.

## **K. Potential Challenges**

Although one proposed new trail crosses the Friedrich Manor HOA property, the City of San Diego has an easement for public access at this location and the HOA has expressed willingness to support any needed adjustments to the easement for public trail access.

There is opposition from a few residents to one of the proposed new trails that would use a portion of the Gregory Street Right of Way to complete the trail system south to Whaley Avenue, based on concern about intrusion from increased foot-traffic on the city-owned right-of-way. SDCL will advocate for installation of trail signage pointing to the legal public access-ways and trailheads.



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#### **IV. ATTACHMENTS**

##### **A. North Juniper Canyon Action Plan Map**

Enhancement opportunities (and constrains) that were identified during stakeholder meetings are numbered on the North Juniper Action Plan Map as follows:

1. Existing kiosk – no change
2. Invasive plant: restore non-native woodland, including removal of Brazilian Pepper
3. Continue previous habitat enhancement work (maintain restored areas)
4. Cover exposed cobblestones in the path due to the meandering stream system. Consider possible flow controls (such as small check dams) to allow silt to fill in between the cobbles. This would be part of a comprehensive stream rehabilitation or erosion control plan.
5. Invasive plant: remove Asparagus vine
6. Possible bank stabilization and planting; This is a riparian-zone suitable for native trees and/or wetland vegetation
7. Invasive plants: remove sapling Eucalyptus and all Acacia
8. Invasive plant: remove Onionweed
9. Invasive plant: remove Asparagus vine
10. Maintain a line of sight in order to mitigate encampments. Other than the line of sight, let the area grow back naturally.
11. Invasive plant: remove Black Wattle Acacia trees
12. Trail enhancement: Create an opening in the guard rail, next to the sidewalk, on the north side of Juniper Street to allow pedestrians to cross the street to the trailheads on either side. Consider a painted pedestrian crosswalk and other traffic calming measures at this location.

##### **B. South Juniper Canyon Action Plan Map**

Enhancement opportunities (and constraints) that were identified during stakeholder meetings are numbered on the South Juniper Action Plan Map as follows:

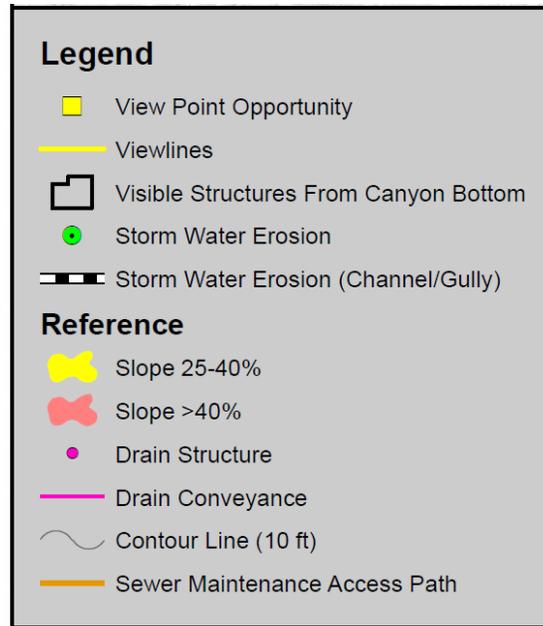
13. Potential new kiosk at the beginning of the trail, on the south side of Juniper Street.
14. Install a sign where the new, proposed trail begins.
15. No public access beyond this point. The trail goes onto private property. The public must not continue south on the trail onto private property past this point.
16. The Friedrich Manor HOA has built a fence where the sewer access/trail goes onto their private property.
17. Establish a trail on the “Right of Way” for public access connecting City-owned land with the Whaley Ave. cul-de-sac.
18. Improve an existing social trail and establish an official trail through Ivy Canyon to connect residents to the main trail.
19. Install signage at the beginning of the trail at the Whaley cul-de-sac to direct trail users.
20. Have footprints painted on the sidewalk to direct trail users southward down Whaley Avenue



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### C. [Juniper Canyon Geo-topological and Erosion Map](#)

The geo-topological conditions map shows the data listed in the legend below such as slope steepness and contour lines. This information is used during the stakeholder planning process (CEP Step 3) to assess opportunities as needed for new trails, identify opportunities for possible viewpoints or viewshed improvements, and identify areas of erosion for possible stabilization actions.



### D. [Juniper Canyon Vegetation Communities Maps](#)

#### E. Required Permits and Agreements

The land in Juniper Canyon is designated as “Environmentally Sensitive Land” per the City of San Diego Land Development Code and all applicable permits must be obtained prior to implementation of any project other than trash removal. **For more details on the following summary of permit and agreement requirements, please click [Required Permits and Agreements](#).**

A Right of Entry (ROE) Agreement with the City is required for any projects proposed in this plan.

Implementing the proposed habitat restoration and weed control projects included in the Juniper Canyon Restoration Plan would require a ROE. Because the City has all required permits to restore and maintain habitat areas, no further permits for habitat restoration is required once a ROE is approved for habitat restoration.

Implementation of the proposed new trail plans would also require a ROE but would also require certification of a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) environmental document, and a Site



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Development Permit from the City of San Diego Development Services Department (DSD). A Grading Permit is also required by DSD for the new trail (unless the City funds and manages the project).

Resource agencies, including the United States (U.S.) Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Regional Water Quality Control Board, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have applicable regulations where wetlands and sensitive habitats may be impacted, thus Resource Agency permits may be required for implementation of the proposed new trail.

## **V. VERSION HISTORY**

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Changes</b>
1	August 8, 2018	New Document