



San Diego Canyonlands
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Canyon Enhancement Planning Juniper Canyon DRAFT Action Plan July 31, 2017

I. INTRODUCTION

San Diego Canyonlands (SDCL) is a non-profit organization dedicated to restoration and preservation of San Diego's unique canyons and creeks. SDCL has established a Canyon/Creek Enhancement Planning (CEP) Committee to create a guide for community stakeholders that facilitates a systems approach for integrating our natural open spaces within the fabric of the urban environment. The steps of the CEP process include the following:

1. **Friends Group Creation:** Establish a knowledgeable Friends Group (stewardship group)
2. **Mapping and Analysis:** Create GIS 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 an Action Plan that summaries the enhancement opportunities, priorities, and solutions to identified issues/problems
4. **Plan Approval:** Build local support, including from civic and planning groups; seek funding, as needed, and obtain permits and/or California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance
5. **Plan Implementation:** Implement the plans where possible through volunteers, collaborations, and partnerships; for other major improvements, seek funding and implement when possible

This draft Juniper Canyon Action Plan is the outcome of the third step—Community Engagement and Planning—in the CEP process. Three Juniper Canyon community stakeholder meetings have been held, the last two being field visits to the canyon. These meetings were held on September 20, 2016; November 12, 2016 and June 17, 2017. Stakeholder priorities, concerns, and other comments were gathered during the first indoor stakeholder meeting. This draft Action Plan summarizes the information and input gathered during the stakeholder meetings and lays out the goals for Juniper Canyon that may be considered for support initially by the stakeholders and after by planning groups and other community/civic groups. Participants/stakeholders included Juniper Canyon friends, neighbors and canyon users, City Rangers and other interested persons. Thorough notes for all meetings are posted on www.sdcanyonlands.org/cep. Scroll down to “Juniper Canyon” document list.

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. A canyon area that is separated from Juniper Canyon by Whaley Avenue in the south is referred to by the City as 34th St. Canyon, and, while it is part of the original canyon (pre-urbanization) it is not include as part of this CEP process. Juniper Canyon is surrounded on all sides by residential development. Additional nearby uses includes St. Augustine High School.

Juniper Canyon has good quality habitat that is within the City's Multiple Habitat Planning Area (MHPA). The endangered California gnatcatcher song birds have been heard/seen in Juniper Canyon.

The Juniper Canyon Friends group has intermittently led stewardship of the canyon since the group was founded in November 2002. City Ranger Jason Allen continued to support and facilitate routine monthly volunteer events so the canyon has enjoyed steady, monthly stewardship over the years. A lot of habitat restoration work has been accomplished. Brush Management Zone rules have limited areas that could be restored in Juniper Canyon and Ranger Jason eventually moved the stewardship events to 34th St. Canyon.

With the help of college interns, SDCL has mapped the existing socio-infrastructure conditions including approved trails and social trails, land ownership, utilities, invasive plant species etc. SDCL has also mapped the geotopographical conditions and view-sheds, and vegetation communities in the canyon.

The California Coastal Conservancy (CCC) has funded San Diego Canyonlands to conduct stakeholder workshops to develop canyon enhancement plans for twelve urban canyons within the City including Juniper Canyon, to include trails (as needed), habitat restoration/enhancement, viewpoints, signage, and other amenities. Further CCC funding is earmarked for trails and habitat restoration conceptual plans.

TRAIL CONDITIONS The canyon trails are separated into two sections (North and South) by Juniper Street. They serve both as utility access roads and public access trails. Utility access roads are limited to a width of eight feet. The northern-most trail entrance leads south from Nutmeg Street to Juniper Street and has an entrance on the east side at 34th Street. There is a spur that heads to the west towards Felton Street but does not have an outlet. In the north section, there is a short social trail near the Juniper street entrance. In the middle of the northern section there are exposed cobbles from heavy rainfall and waterflow. The rest of the northern trail is in good condition.

The south trail leads from Juniper Street down through the center of the canyon and ends at the private property. Please see attached draft Action Plan Map to note where it stops. The southern portion has several social trails leading to residential backyards. One goal of canyon enhancement planning is to steer canyon users to well-planned, official trails and minimize social trail use. Currently, the trail follows an alignment for a utility access road onto Friedrich Manor HOA property. This access road may not be *currently* used for routine maintenance, but the City's utility access easement onto the HOA property still exists and a well defined social trail still enters the HOA private property. Friedrich Manner HOA is contemplating installation of a fence on their property to block public at this location.

Also in the south portion of Juniper Canyon, the stakeholders have discussed a **new trail alignment** that has been approved within the North Park Community Plan Update adopted by the City on October 25 2016. Here is a link: <https://www.sandiego.gov/planning/community/profiles/greaternorthpark/plan>

The approved trail would splice off of the existing trail heading west and up the slope to the Gregory Street Right of Way (ROW). Please see Draft Juniper Canyon Action Plan Map. It follows the Gregory St. ROW heading south and turns back to the east and heads downslope through City property and the Fir St. ROW to the cul-de-sac at Whaley Avenue.

The new trail alignment has the support of the attending stakeholders. The alignment crosses an existing easement on the Friedrich Manor HOA property where the Fir St. Right of Way connects with Whaley Avenue. The Friedrich Manor HOA Board has conditionally supported this new trail alignment if the City provides an amendment to the Fir Street Right of Way to allow only non-vehicle public access.

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 etc., Rangers, and Police for monitoring and reporting illegal activities in the canyon.

III. ACTION PLAN

- A. HABITAT RESTORATION** Most stakeholders support habitat restoration/enhancement for wildlife and native vegetation preservation, as well as enhancing the aesthetics of the trails.
- This includes control and/or removal of non-native plant species. Some non-native species noted in the canyon include acacia, asparagus vine, horehound, and others.
 - The stakeholders agreed that larger, non-native trees would not be removed at this time until larger, native trees could grow tall enough to provide a shade canopy in their place.
 - SD canyonlands is funded by the California Coastal Conservancy to create conceptual restoration plans for Juniper Canyon. SDCL will seek funding to implement these plans once in place.

Plan, restore and enhance native habitat throughout the canyon.

- Restore areas adjacent to trails and other degraded habitats within the canyon
- Close, revegetate/restore unapproved, social trails
- Correct erosion issues where unnatural erosion is creating unstable streambanks or eroding slopes
- Remove small, non-native eucalyptus, and palm trees (seedlings, saplings) and plant or allow native trees to grow and replace them;
- Leave larger non-native trees in place until native trees can provide a canopy;
 - Survey trees for nesting birds (oriels etc.) prior to removal
 - Removal of any mature tree would need to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).
- Maintain a line of site in the oak grove in the northern portion of North Juniper canyon in order to monitor for homeless encampments and illegal activities.
- Research water retention opportunities where needed to stabilize eroding stream banks and to encourage infiltration and water table recharge.

B. TRAILS

The northern portion of Juniper Canyon Trail near the Nutmeg entrance is filled with cobbles that were a topic of concern to some stakeholders. Ultimately a majority of stakeholders agreed that cobbles should be left naturally to conserve the greenspace rather than disturb an area of natural stream flow. They discussed leaving the cobbles in place and potentially filling them in with dirt for stabilization. The concept of minor check-dams was discussed to slow the storm water flows and trap sediment between the cobbles.

Plan an official trail that is similar to Switzer Canyon trails and provides canyon users with convenient, legal access and steers users away from entering private property.

- Trail building/realignment areas should favor:
 - Establishing sustainable convenient, safe, multi-use trail conditions for walking, jogging and mountain biking
 - Establish trail with gentle slopes
 - Trail projects/enhancement must not impact or constrain utility access
 - Install trail signage directing trail users onto official trails with legal public access
 - Footprints on sidewalks along Whaley Avenue was suggested to show trail users where to go to reach 34th St. Canyon in the south once the trail reaches the cul-de-sac
 - Explore potential, multi-canyon trail linkages across public streets resulting in more, multi-canyon, loop trail opportunities (similar to linkages for City Heights Canyons)
 - A small loop at the end of the North and/or South canyon trails was suggested
 - A loop connecting to Ivy (finger) Canyon was suggested
 - A suggestion to put in a trail on both the north and south slopes to create a loop trail was not supported because of impacts to habitat and resulting agency opposition.

IV. REQUIRED PERMITS AND AGREEMENTS

Permit Requirements

The land in San Diego’s canyons, including Juniper Canyon, is designated as “Environmentally Sensitive Land” per the City of San Diego Land Development Code and all applicable permits must be obtained. Implementation of the trails plan will require certification of a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) document, a Site Development Permit from the City of San Diego Development Services Department, and a Grading Permit (unless the City funds and builds the trails).

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 are involved, and Resource Agency permits may be required for proposed trails/enhancement projects.

In any case, habitat restoration/enhancement projects, trails and other enhancements require approval and close coordination with a number of departments within the City of San Diego. A Right of Entry from the City for implementation of any project may be required.

Juniper Canyon Action Plan Map Callouts (Numbered in order on the maps North to South)

1. Existing kiosk
2. Invasive plant: Non-native woodland with Brazilian Pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*)
3. Suggestion to add bench by kiosk, (concerns about creating a hangout were expressed)
4. Continue previous habitat enhancement work (maintain restored areas)
5. Exposed cobble stones in the path are part of a meandering stream system. Consider possible flow controls (small check dams) or fill to help make footpath safer
6. Invasive plant: Asparagus vine (*Asparagus atheiopicus*)
7. Possible Bank Stabilization and planting; This is a riparian-zone suitable for native trees and/or wetland vegetation
8. Individual, residential property construction area. Construction is in progress
9. Invasive plants: sapling Eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus globu*) and Acacia (*Acacia mearnsii*)
10. Invasive plant: Onionweed shrubs (*Asphodelus fistulosus*)
11. Invasive plant: Asparagus vine (*Asparagus atheiopicus*)
12. Maintain a line of sight in order to mitigate encampments. Other than the line of sight, let the area grow back naturally.
13. Invasive plant: Black Wattle Acacia trees (*Acacia mearnsii*)
14. Create an opening in the guard rail, next to the sidewalk, on the north side of the Juniper canyon dip to allow for crossing to the south side trail, consider a painted pedestrian crosswalk and other traffic calming measures to cross the Juniper St. “dip” at this location.

SOUTH JUNIPER CANYON

15. Potential new kiosk at the beginning of the trail, on the south side of Juniper Street.
16. Install a sign where the new, proposed trail entrance begins.
17. **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.
18. The Freidrick Manor HOA is planning TO build a fence where the trail goes onto their private property.
19. There is a “Right of Way” for public access connecting City-owned land with the Whaley cul-de-sac.
20. Suggest signage at the beginning of the trail at the Whaley cul-de-sac to direct trail users.
21. Consider painted footprints on the sidewalk to direct trail users to 34th St. Canyon.