



Juniper Canyon Enhancement Planning

Workshop 1, Notes

September 20, 2016; 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

2621 Bancroft St.

San Diego, CA 92104

Stakeholder Attendees

San Diego Canyonlands Staff and Interns

Eric Bowlby – Executive Director

Dave George – GIS/Ecologist

Juniper Canyon Stakeholders

Ranger Jason Allen – Senior Park Ranger, City of San Diego Parks and Rec

Kristi Drake

Cara D'Angelo

Arthur Stillwell

1. Introductory Comments & CEP Process:

- Eric gave introductions and overview of CEP goals, and noted that the turnout was not as expected; however, key stakeholders are in the room

2. Opportunities and Constraints

- Key note: closing social trails and providing sustainable, safe trails will benefit canyon habitats
- Lands are within City Open Space, City Park Land, street right-of-way, and other land owned or managed by public entities. Sometimes public easements go through private lands. Private property owners may involve their land.
- First three steps include 1) creating a friends of the canyon group and conduct outreach, 2) existing conditions maps, 3) then stakeholder meetings (first two completed)

3. Canyonlands Enhancement Plan Goals:

- Eric provided overview of canyonlands and CEP process, the resources & wildlife agencies involved, etc.
- Balance conservation of resources with enjoyment of Open Space
- Provide public access to nature and connections to other trails or key destinations
- Recreation compatible with natural resources

4. Stakeholder Introductions and Brief Comments

- Art Stillwell – Friedrick Homeowners Association: hold monthly board meetings in which Eric and Laura have attended to inform of CEP process. Two concerns:

- 1) people accessing private land,
- 2) concept of inviting people on regular basis to trek through private land.
- Concern for homeowners and potential impacts to home values resulting from public access – main mission of HOA board is to protect the value of homes in their community.
- Eric noted Community Plan Update (CPU) process and the City's inclusion of stakeholder-identified trails in Switzer Canyon. The trails within Juniper Canyon that Art is concerned about is also included in the North Park CPU.
- Cara D'Angelo – resident that lives close to Juniper Canyon: There is an access point off of Nutmeg. Right now there's not that much of a trail – it dead-ends and does not provide good access through Juniper Canyon. Would like to see trails like Switzer Canyon.
- Kristi Drake – works at an architecture firm (to be architect), recently moved to San Diego: Enjoys walking her dog down Switzer Canyon and is interested in Juniper Canyon. Right now the access points to Juniper Canyon are not very inviting, but sees great potential for urban trail connectivity, suggests a Master Plan for canyon trails.
- Ranger Jason Allen – Open Space Canyons; aiming to preserve these areas as natural habitat/open space for sensitive wildlife. Also promote recreation within canyons –hiking, biking, equestrian. Short staffed, low funding...manages about 3,500 acres so depends on volunteers like Canyonlands and other non-profits to restore habitat, trash cleanup, safety. Finds it interesting what stakeholders had mentioned about Switzer Canyon trails. Has physically worked in Juniper Canyon for over 11 years before he became manager. Still doing volunteer events.
- Eric/Jason – half of Juniper Canyon may be referred to as 34th Street Canyon.
- Jason – Juniper Canyon south end has more opportunities for larger groups to visit, higher habitat potential. Did a lot of work in the north end, but more constrained due to brush management, etc.
- Eric – vision to create lasting stewardship groups/friends of canyon groups that work hand-in-hand with ranger group.
- Jason – Open Space has good partnership with SD Canyonlands, share volunteers and cross-promote events. Want community members to be most involved, but pull volunteers from anywhere, including students who need community hours. The rangers and SD Canyonlands need to keep volunteers involved and continue these programs.
- Dave George – Canyonlands ecology and GIS. Has done invasive plants management, trash removal, native plantings, trains GIS interns. Lives off of 47th Street Canyon and sees similar issues. Has done some species mapping for Juniper Canyon and is interested in enhancing the habitat, enhancing trails, correcting erosion/drainage issues, etc.
- Eric noted that interns from SDSU and Mesa College have helped out with GIS mapping

5. Review Existing Conditions Maps

- Geotopo Map was displayed
- Social Infrastructure Map was displayed – this map is important because it shows sewer, water, electrical lines, as well as private vs City owned areas. Identifies City rights-of-way (ROWs) (sometimes includes street ROWs that were never developed). Useful map when discussing opportunities for trails/facilities.
- Juniper Canyons is furthest south of the 12 canyons in City the California Coastal Conservancy

has funded for Canyon Enhancement Planning as well as conceptual plans for trails and habitat restoration to submit to City of San Diego for permitting

- Coastal Conservancy also allocated money for solving stormwater/drainage problems to improve the overall watershed
- Coastal Conservancy is interested in coastal health and providing better access to coast
- Trail Alignment Map was displayed
- Art has concerns with an existing trail shown on the map just south of Juniper Street. It's a well used path, but has never been formally designated as a trail. Problems with public walking down that path, which dead-ends, and people end up climbing over fencing and into private property (backyard)
- Art made clear that this is a sewer easement (where sewer runs), not an access easement/access road – if sewers need maintenance, they do so through the private property.
- Also cross City of San Diego Open Space Parcels
- Eric noted that the City's sewer infrastructure was having spill problems and EPA was going to fine them if they didn't do something to prevent spills
- Dave noted that a trail doesn't necessarily mean "approved trail". However, Art stated that it's not clear/people don't realize that
- Art noted that the City's Parks and Recreation (as well as various online maps including GoogleMaps) has also identified private property at the HOA as a dog park (Whaley Avenue Dog Park). HOA is planning to fence it off and label as private property. His point is that labeling something as "trail" will incentivize people to visit the spot.
- Ranger Jason noted that the City's map shows that the trail dead-ends and no further access is provided.
- Dave noted that you can see there is a utility access road (technically) that follows sewer line.
- Eric pointed out that a gate and signage is being considered so that people know that it is private property. This would be one solution to the HOA's issues with the trail
- Eric is asking if this is an official trail for public use. Ranger Jason says yes, the section up until the HOA private property. Eric notes that we need to label the map appropriately to show private property and "sewer easement only".
- Art noted that dead-end and private property signage would not necessarily keep people out – they wouldn't just go back up the canyon once they've gotten that far.
- Art would love to see trails in all canyons and thinks it would be a great accomplishment/wonderful community amenity. Art would vote to allow a trail along that easement, but under certain conditions. Don't want to invite people to go off in other directions (e.g., up into adjacent canyon that is private property)
- Eric, Jason, and Art have met an owner of a portion of the canyon property (Jack Heinowitz)
 - Art mentioned that the HOA has been taking care of portion of his land (landscaping/vegetation management). He had an easement more than 30 years ago for irrigation, etc.
- Adjacent City Open Space does not have designated trails but trails are used often
- Juniper/34th St. Canyon is very steep – trails would need switch backs. The trail ends at the 94, so users would need to just turn around and go back. Art suggests adding a "No U-Turn" sign there. He doesn't think hikers will want to walk on sidewalks and will cut through other canyons.
- Jason noted that this urban hiking experience is a different sort of experience than, for

example, Mission Trails. Much of the canyon planning includes connecting trails through the streetscape, so people will hike both in canyons and along sidewalks.

- Eric – once you take Juniper Canyon, hit the 94, then there's open space that follows the 15.
- Art thinks it's a problem because once you walk down a trail, it's just a there and back. He would like to see a loop.
- Kristie and Cara agree that there's something frustrating about a there-and-back trail and would like to see loops
- Cara mentioned that one thing you can think about showing access out of the canyon, with a little loop at the end of the open space
- Cara notes that putting up signage is discouraging trail options out of the area.
- Art says that if trails invite unsavory people, there will be problems.
- Eric – there is value having trails/access to parkland and open space near your home as well. Art noted/agreed.
- HOA property owners do hike up Juniper Canyon already, along the sewer access road. HOA has gate on their property line where they can go up canyon to connect to Grape Street.
- Ranger – technically, there should be no private access to public lands (e.g., access directly from your property onto City's rather than from a public street).
- Eric reiterated that the trails maintained by the City should be open to the public and not just for one or two private property owners. So if City is going to maintain trails in that area pointed out by Art, it would need to have clear public access.
- Ranger Jason took Art's business card and will coordinate later on any trail problems
- Eric noted that the CEP process is looking to get a community consensus (or as close to it as possible) regarding the trails.
- Art provided some samples of what trail signage could look like. "Follow Trail to Right. No Outlet Going South. Private Property Ahead."
 - Kristie noted that this seems a narrow-minded solution
 - Dave noted that it would make sense to just to close the trail at this point.
 - Art said HOA is thinking of a fence along the trails
- Kristie says there is much more elegant ways to discourage people from crossing property than a fence. From planning perspective, we should be coming up with criteria that we need to meet in order to have a solution. Why would the solution be great? What does it need? (e.g., we don't want people entering private property)
- Kristie works with landscape architects and civil engineers all the time and never is a fence/signage a solution.
- Kristie asked about the topography here. Eric said that we have topo maps and would appreciate Kristie's opinions on creative solutions here. We can boil these meeting notes down to a list of criteria.
- Art appreciates that people are involved in this but the main issues are people accessing the HOA private property, getting into the pool, showers, home break-ins, etc.
- Kristie noted that if there's a fence, people will want to climb it.
- Art noted that maybe we put up a fence and take it down once a better solution is found
- Kristie asked about funding from CA Coastal Conservancy for trails
- Art pointed to Ivy Canyon and sees a loop from Juniper Canyon
- Kristie said we don't have enough information in front of us to comprehensively talk about a solution yet. Eric asked what information we do need. Kristie would like an actual topo map,

- and time to sit down and analyze it to really understand where these trails are going.
- Kristie – discussion would be about a loop within the canyon itself rather than through additional canyons (trail down on one side and going back up on the other). But need a topo map to be able to determine if you can do that.
 - Eric noted that this map doesn't show the private property lines – some private properties go down into the slopes
 - Kristie said we need to come up with what we want. Do we want it to be an urban trail? Private trail? Constraints of what we don't want it to be.
 - Dave and Eric shows the City Heights CEP plan – connecting trailheads of different canyons through streetscape linkages and through parks. You have to cross urban locations in some locations. Some native landscaping, mural and pocket park opportunities along the streetscape
 - Art – what about connecting Ivy and Juniper Canyons? Kirstie suggested putting in some sort of landmark or element that shows people how they can access these trailheads
 - Ranger Jason – trails are along sewer access trails because they have to be there. Have to remain open for access. When you put a new trail through habitat, there's a lot more impacts and permitting concerns. So putting trails along these existing access easements are the least impactful and preferred. The bigger vision 20-50 years from now could be an awesome loop throughout the canyon network but the vision for now is to choose trails that link to other open spaces and are easy and can be implemented soon.
 - Kristie suggested a phasing opportunity and Phase 1 just establishes where trails would be and shows hikers where current trails are and what future might provide
 - Eric said there is a constraint: MHPA (Multiple Habitat Preserve Area). Juniper Canyon and Switzer Canyon are within the MHPA and have sensitive wildlife and plant communities. Still, to link them together/cross the urban landscape is a fabulous vision. Canyons outside the MHPA have less regulatory challenges when looking at trails.
 - Kristie said come up with a solution that satisfies the HOA, the MHPA, social/public needs, etc.
 - Art thinks if you come all the way down Juniper Canyon trail, what's the point of dropping down to the last portion just to get to the 94? Ranger Jason also thinks it would be better to connect with existing network of trails within City open space/along sewer access trails.
 - Kristie asked how were the network of trails that exist established? A. They are mainly sewer access roads and used/social trails. Many are not official trails. Many were created without taking sensitive habitat into consideration.
 - Cara said used (social) trails probably already follow the path of least resistance. Used (social) trails are preferred for official trails because they are already there.
 - Ranger Jason said the issue is that some of these trails are through sensitive habitat
 - Eric noted that we are getting Master Permit and CEQA document for these types of projects. City has \$52K to generate the CEQA document to cover the Master Permit. Been years in the making.
 - Eric discussed that the General Plan aims to branch out of the existing sewer access trail segments
 - Canyonlands is funded to create the conceptual trail plan for Juniper Canyon. Beyond that, Canyonlands is not funding to create a connected network between other canyons.
 - Ranger Jason – there are City planners that are also looking at this (and have looked at this) as to where we need trail maintenance/additional trails/etc
 - Laura, the City Open Space trails coordinator, is working on this and thinking about main

connecting points and working in the Community Plan Update process to make sure trails get included.

- Kristie asked other than MHPA, are there other restrictions? Eric said yes, the streams through the canyons are protected by the Clean Water Act, which the California Regional Water Quality Control Board is in charge of administering. There's a lot of regulation around it.
- Art noted that all of Chollas Creek is part of the RWQCB control. Eric – yes, all of the wetlands within the watershed.
- There's also Army Corps of Engineers involvement, who are in charge of permitting any dredge and fill.
- Eric noted that Canyonlands (Juniper Canyon is within the Chollas Watershed), part of watershed that empties into the bay. By restoring the natural filtration benefit of our canyons, we will improve water quality of San Diego Bay.
- Ranger Jason said switchbacks need to be sustainable. Everything is going to involve some sort of maintenance. Maintenance frequency depends on conditions, rainfall, etc.
- KTU+a landscape architecture is a firm designing canyon trails. Dave noted that wherever needed, try to get funding for appropriate engineers to design the trails.
- Funding for the planning. Eric noted that the Switzer Plan is really solid and has community support. It's proposed in the CPU process. The exact trail and steps, etc. have not been planned (just the general alignments).
- If CPU is done, would the City have money for this? Ranger Jason says there's a certain amount of funding to do it. Not every trail needs engineering and 100% designed and implemented by experts, rangers can use volunteers to do some work.
- Art asks if trails are limited to foot traffic and how they keep motorcycles out? Ranger Jason noted that they put in barriers, gates and other things to keep motorcycles out. They are not invited to use the trails (no off-road vehicle activity allowed. Bicycles and equestrian also allowed as long as they stay on trails, except select trails that are not multi-use).
- Art thinks there should be footprints on sidewalks to show where people can walk and provides a clear trail access.
- Eric thinks this has been a great discussion, will send any information (GIS shapefiles, etc.)
- Eric to send out link to the Community Plan Update EIR that has been out for draft review.

6. Review of Socio-Infrastructure Conditions (North to South) - Stakeholder Input

- Did not get to topic

7. Next Meeting & Stakeholder Field Trips

- TBD

Main Points:

- There is an existing problem with people hiking along the trails not realizing when they are entering private property or not realizing Juniper Canyon city open-space trails dead-end.
- The HOA is concerned with the public accessing their land and is planning to fence off their land but would consider other options
- Stakeholders would like to see a loop/round-trip trail rather than a there-and-back trail

- Goal is to come up with trail solutions that satisfy all parameters: HOA needs, public access, (loop trails strongly preferred where possible), limiting access to only City Open Space (and connecting across public streets where necessary), understanding property and ecosystem limitations, permitting, and funding.