



OUR HISTORY

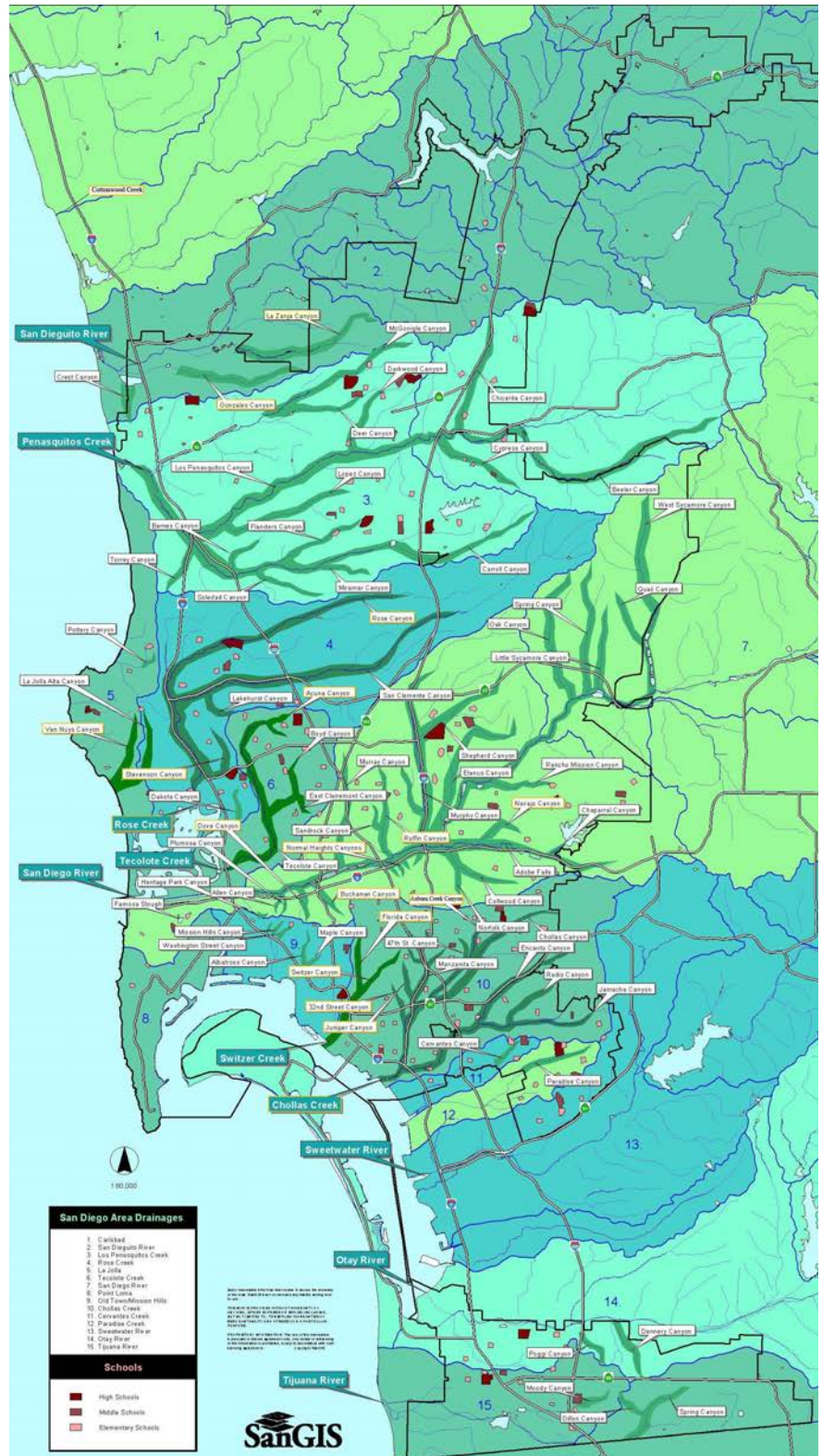




ABOUT SAN DIEGO CANYONLANDS

San Diego is unique as a major metropolitan area with natural open spaces, including hundreds of canyons and stretches of creek habitats scattered throughout the urban environment. These canyons, these islands of open space, are like mini-regional parks in our backyards. They play an important role in our wellness through filtration of air and water, provide access to nature, and important habitat for wildlife.

San Diego Canyonlands works towards preserving and restoring our canyons, and to influence policies towards their protection. We are also committed to fostering opportunities to use our canyons as educational spaces where San Diego's youth can learn about our unique wildlife and ecosystems with hands-on experiences. We promote recreational use in San Diego's urban wildlands and are dedicated to promoting, protecting, and restoring our canyons and creeks.





A BRIEF HISTORY

San Diego Canyonlands has a compelling, exciting, inspirational history. It is quintessentially American to stand up for what you believe in and to quote Margret Mead, "never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world". The citizens of San Diego became a groundswell that took on the City to change the way they interact with Open Space canyons and creeks, creating the "Canyonlands" movement along the way. In the summer of 1998, communities surrounding San Diego neighborhood canyons were informed about plans to build permanent sewer line maintenance roads at the base of several canyons. The residents surrounding North Park's Switzer Canyon came to the Sierra Club's San Diego Chapter with concerns about the impacts these paved roads could have on their canyon. These neighbors expressed that the canyons were precious to them, that they provided an escape to nature in urban San Diego, and that they didn't want to see roads paved through these valuable lands. In response, on a rainy Saturday morning in October 1998, the Sierra Club conducted a free and informative tour of Switzer Canyon, with 60 residents in attendance. These citizens came together to organize a 'Friends Group' and launched the San Diego Canyons Campaign. The Sierra Club, recognizing that San Diegans love their neighborhood canyons, continued to develop Friends Groups for dozens of canyons throughout San Diego County. With the championship of City Council representative Christine Kehoe and the pressure of several organized canyon groups, united as a city-wide Canyons Coalition, the City Council passed a temporary moratorium on road-building in canyons. They established a Task Force to research alternatives to the obtrusive access roads and develop policies for accessing the sewer system while minimizing impacts to canyon habitats. In January 2002, the City Council adopted the Task Force recommendations, limiting access to 8-foot wide, unpaved, and vegetated roads. Success! In 2008, with the support of the Sierra Club, the Canyons Campaign leadership formed San Diego Canyonlands, a new 501(c)3 nonprofit with a Board of Directors and plan now dedicated to continuing and growing the movement to advocate for and restore San Diego's canyons and creeks. Over a decade later, we are still committed to protecting, promoting, and restoring canyons and creeks throughout San Diego

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Canyon Enhancement Planning

San Diego is the eighth-largest city in the United States, spanning 372 square miles, and home to nearly 1.5 million residents. However, San Diego differs from most large cities as it has not been completely paved over, with nearly 150 canyons and creeks are scattered throughout the urban landscape.. These urban canyons provide San Diegans with the unique opportunity to experience nature within a large metropolis. Our urban canyons and creeks allow our community to engage in the natural world. Not only do we have access to these natural spaces within our own neighborhoods, but they also yield amazing benefits to humans and the local ecology. These canyons and creeks provide valuable ecosystem goods and services and are home to the largest diversity of plants and wildlife in the contiguous United States. They also increase water quality, provide recreational and educational opportunities, climate resiliency, and an overall increase of quality of life. Unfortunately, canyons and creeks are threatened by increased urbanization. Precious open spaces are in dire need of enhancements, including safe and enjoyable access, wetland and upland habitat restoration, and the opportunity to integrate this natural space into the fabric of our urban environment. That's the aim of Canyon Enhancement Planning (CEP). After the City of San Diego General Plan's adoption in 2008, San Diego Canyonlands established the CEP Committee made up of urban design visionaries, professional landscape architects, and others to help implement this vision. The CEP Program is helping to facilitate a systems approach for implementing a regional vision that weaves our natural open spaces with the fabric of the urban environment, to gain progress towards recreational opportunities restoration, preservation, environment-based education, and ecologically sensitive recreation.

City Heights Canyons Loop Trail

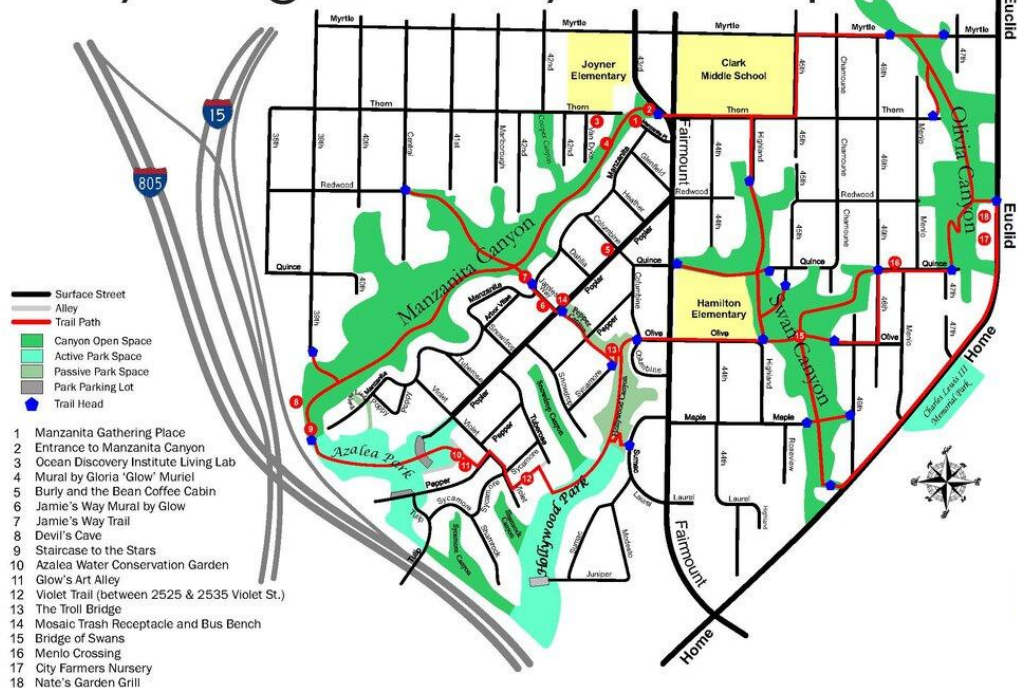
In 2009, San Diego Canyonlands began implementing Canyon Enhancement Planning in City Heights, an underserved and park-deficient community in Southeast San Diego. San Diego Canyonlands began with Manzanita Canyon, one of four



ACCOMPLISHMENTS CONTINUED

canyons in the City Heights Canyon Complex, as its pilot canyon and held a series of five stakeholder planning workshops for the surrounding community. In 2011, the stakeholders finalized their Manzanita Canyon Enhancement Plan. Progress was quickly made on several of the Enhancement Plan's projects, including US Fish and Wildlife funding for wetland restoration and a refurbished connector trail between Azalea Park and the south end of the canyon. This project was completed with the help of Urban Corps of San Diego and KTU&A Landscape Architect John Holloway. The Canyon Enhancement project in City Heights continued through 2012 as San Diego Canyonlands completed plans for the other three canyons within the City Heights Canyon Complex, Hollywood Canyon, Olivia Canyon, and Swan Canyon. This successful community planning helped San Diego Canyonlands obtain nearly one million dollars in funding to implement a loop trail to connect these four canyons. The City Heights Canyons Loop Trail connected these four canyons by intersecting dirt canyon trails with paved city streets and sidewalks. The construction of this trail is the perfect example of how urban developments can coalesce with the natural environment.

City Heights Canyons Loop Trail



ACCOMPLISHMENTS CONTINUED

Volunteer Events

San Diego Canyonlands has hosted weekly volunteer events across the county for over a decade. At these stewardship events, we have engaged with thousands of volunteers of all ages and backgrounds, resulting in safer access and healthier canyons and creeks. These volunteers have helped us remove thousands of pounds of invasive species and planted thousands of native plants in their place. The volunteer events are the backbone of this organization, and the canyons and creeks wouldn't be where they are today without the help of volunteers over the years.

Park Dedication

In the 1970's City Council passed a successful initiative allowing land owners to split their parcels and sell the steep slopes and canyon creek portions to the city. Though the work and planning to defend this vision has required arduous stands by determined citizens (and indeed much has been lost), a system of open space is fairly intact and can be restored to serve a variety of important services. This is an example of "park dedication". Dedication itself does not result in any changes or additional cost in maintenance to the City. In order for land to become dedicated, a 2/3 vote of the people is required to convert dedicated lands to non-park uses. Land that is merely "designated" as open space can be converted, transferred, or sold with five votes of City Council. However, dedicated lands are preserved as natural open space or developed for active outdoor recreation. The City Council has the authority to grant easements for utility purposes across Dedicated property including roads sewer lines, drainage channels, and among other things. In December 2007, the City ratified State legislation, authored by Senator Christine Kehoe and supported by Mayor Jerry Sanders and signed by Governor Schwarzenegger, that Dedicated ~6,600 acres of open space land. This State legislation allowed the city to save over \$1 million dollars in unnecessary entitlement costs. In December 2012, as a result of years of effort by SDCL, City Council dedicated 6,500 acres for permanent protection, an area six times the size of Balboa Park!

Canyon Friends Groups

San Diego Canyonlands works to engage residents into the volunteer stewardship of local urban canyons or creeks through the development of Canyon Friends Groups throughout San Diego County. We conduct educational guided tours of neighborhood canyons and creeks to start up Canyon Friends Groups that will "adopt" and routinely maintain these natural open spaces. These groups are essential in maintaining the health of local canyons and creeks.





AND THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING...

San Diego Canyonlands will continue to protect, promote, and restore the canyons and creeks of San Diego County in perpetuity. As a nonprofit dedicated to our open spaces, we are eager to see what the future holds and how we can accomplish bigger and better things. Here's to the future!

Summer 2020
www.sdcanyonlands.org
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