

ALTADENA CREST TRAIL CONNECTORS PROJECT



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1. WHAT IS THE ALTADENA CREST TRAIL CONNECTORS PROJECT?

This project is the creation of two new trails that will provide public access for all to the Altadena Crest Trail, Chaney Trail, and the Angeles National Forest's extensive network of trails. These trails were promised to the community of Altadena over 30 years ago as a condition of a nearby development project.

2. HOW DID THIS PROJECT COME ABOUT?

As a condition for a nearby residential development in the 1980s, Los Angeles County required the conservation of open space around the development and provision of access trails for public use. The development, including the trails, was approved in 1996 but the developer did not comply with the public trails component. After litigation involving numerous parties, including some private citizens and government agencies, a court judgement in 2008 required that the County develop the trails. In 2017, the County and MRCA agreed that MRCA would assume the role of building and maintaining the trails so that the public access promise of over 30 years ago could be realized.

3. WHO IS INVOLVED IN THIS PROJECT?

The project is being carried out through a collaboration of different agencies. The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) is responsible for finalizing and building the trail alignment. The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC) provided funding to MRCA for trail construction and owns land where the trails will be made. The Los Angeles County Department of Recreation and Parks Trails Division is providing technical support and the County's Regional Planning Department is responsible for ensuring that regulatory requirements are met. The County owns trail easements related to the project and also provided some funding for trail construction.

4. HOW HAS THE COMMUNITY BEEN INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT?

The Altadena community has been involved in the project since the late 1980s when the development was proposed. When the County's requirements of the developer were not met, community members and open space advocates initiated and supported litigation to enforce the requirements. Today, the Altadena Crest Trail Restoration Working Group provides input to MRCA on the trail planning and keeps MRCA advised of community concerns. Community volunteer workdays that were planned for 2020 are on hold due to COVID-19. A briefing was provided to the Altadena Town Council in March 2021 and future updates will be made.



5. WHERE ARE THE TRAILS LOCATED?

The two trails are located on either side of the La Vina development in northwest Altadena, CA. The eastern trail will be accessed from Sunset Ridge Road, near Loma Alta Park, and will connect to the Altadena Crest Trail system. The western trail will be accessed from Millard Canyon and will connect to the eastern trail.

6. WHO IS GOING TO BUILD THE TRAILS?

Outward Bound Adventures (OBA), a local non-profit organization which engages and trains youth and young adults from diverse communities to help promote stewardship of open spaces, will build portions of the eastern trail. OBA was founded at a Pasadena elementary school in 1962 to serve primarily Black, Asian, and Hispanic or Latino youth from economically disadvantaged families. Today, OBA serves hundreds of youth each year from all over the Los Angeles metro area and retains their headquarters at John Muir High School in northwest Pasadena. OBA's Environmental Restoration Teams (ERT) provide youth ages 16 and above training and experience in environmental and conservation work, including natural resource management skills, wildlife preservation techniques, and habitat restoration techniques among many more. OBA's crews also work closely with a Biologist for onsite trail work.

7. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT?

The Altadena community and regional trail users have been waiting over three decades for these public access trails to be developed. The initiation of the project marks a historical conclusion to the decades of legal disputes and signals a new generation of public conservation stewards. OBA provides youth and young adults who are interested in the environment and outdoor conservation with paid hands-on training and experience. These community-based crew members' experience will lead to long-lasting stewardship of the trails and surroundings. These trails will offer the opportunity for more people to access these beautiful mountains and enjoy the many benefits of the outdoors, as well as educate the public on the local habitat and environmental conservation. The trail connectors will provide improved connectivity from the Millard Canyon trail, a trail historically used by the public, to the greater Altadena Crest Trail network.

8. WHEN WILL THE TRAILS BE BUILT?

Groundbreaking for the project was delayed for almost a year due to COVID-19. The eastern trail is now underway and is expected to be complete in 2022. Planning and development of the western trail will occur after the eastern trail is done.



9. WHERE CAN I ACCESS ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION FOR THIS PROJECT?

Both trails were studied as part of a completed full CEQA documentation process by the Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning. The trails are a mitigation measure, themselves, as required by the Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning as a condition for the La Vina development to be built. Contact project manager, Sarah.Kevorkian@mrca.ca.gov to request info.

10. IS THERE AN EIR FOR THE PROJECT?

Yes, the trails were included in the Environmental Impact Report which was finalized in 1992. As the responsible agency, Los Angeles County, as approved by the County Board of Supervisors, has approved that no further environmental review is required.

11. WHAT PERMITS ARE REQUIRED?

MRCA is currently consulting with required regulatory agencies including the Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife who will determine if any further permitting is needed.

12. WILL THE PROJECT DAMAGE SENSITIVE HABITAT?

The greater Altadena Foothills area, which includes the existing Altadena Crest Trail system, is designated as a Significant Ecological Area (SEA). The MRCA is consulting with Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning's County Biologist to determine if further permitting is needed, as the trails have already been studied and approved by Los Angeles County. The trails' areas have been historically used and are contemporarily accessed by members of the public. The MRCA's intent is to develop designated trails for the public to stay on which will help protect the existing habitat.

13. WHO WILL BE ABLE TO USE THE TRAILS?

The trails will be open to all members of the public. There will not be an entrance fee. The eastern trail will be open to hikers and equestrians, as per the court settlement. The western trail will be designed to multi-use standards as to not preclude any future uses of the trail.



14. WHO WILL MAINTAIN THE TRAILS? HOW WILL MAINTENANCE BE FUNDED?

MRCA will maintain the trails and funding for basic maintenance will come from MRCA's budget.

15. WILL THERE BE OPPORTUNITIES TO VOLUNTEER?

We certainly hope so! Community workdays that were planned for 2020 were canceled due to COVID-19. These will be rescheduled when public gatherings are once again allowed.

16. HOW CAN I STAY INFORMED OR FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT?

Join the ACT Connectors project mailing list by emailing Sarah.Kevorkian@mrca.ca.gov to receive occasional updates. Project photos and information will be posted on MRCA's website under the heading "Altadena Crest Trail Connectors". Follow us on social media as @mrcaparks on Instagram and Twitter and LAMountains on Facebook.

