

TO: James L. App, City Manager
FROM: Ed Gallagher, Community Development Director
SUBJECT: Draft Salinas River Trail Master Plan
DATE: November 19, 2013

NEEDS: For the City Council to: (1) receive an briefing on the Draft Salinas River Trail Master Plan; and (2) to provide a letter of recommendation to the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) for the Plan.

FACTS:

1. In 2012, SLOCOG received a grant (and provided matching funds) to prepare a regional (35-mile) river-themed trail plan connecting San Miguel to Santa Margarita along the Salinas River corridor - the Salinas River Trail Master Plan.
2. The City formally supported (by resolution) SLOCOG's efforts to prepare this plan and agreed to participate as a partner in its preparation.
3. The concept of the SLOCOG trail plan was an outgrowth of the City's Salinas River Vision, "Follow-the-River, Follow-the-Dream" to provide river trail connections through the City, and extending the trail to destinations north and south of the City's borders.
4. SLOCOG conducted significant public outreach. A steering committee and stakeholders committee was established with representatives from San Miguel, Templeton and Santa Margarita, Atascadero, Paso Robles, various other public agencies, and local property owners.
4. The Planning Commission received a briefing on the Draft Salinas River Trail Plan on November 12, 2013. However, the Council staff report needed to be prepared prior to the Commission's meeting date, therefore, the Commission's recommendation will be provided to the Council when staff conducts the presentation on this project.
5. A public review draft of the Salinas River Trail Master Plan is available for review and comment, see www.salinasrivertrail.com. Comments should be submitted to SLOCOG by November 19, 2013. The SLOCOG Board will consider the Plan at their meeting on December 4, 2013.

ANALYSIS & CONCLUSION:

A River Trail Master Plan is needed to identify feasible short-term and desirable long-term alignments for a comprehensive multi-use North County trail system. The trail would be located along the Salinas River and within the historic Anza corridor to provide off-highway recreational and commuter travel between communities.

Many segments in the more urban areas of Paso Robles and Atascadero have already been constructed, however the trail segments lack connectivity between North County communities. The Master Plan is intended to serve as a guide so that various trail implementing entities can construct individual segments over time and ensure that these pieces will ultimately be part of an overall connected trail system along the Salinas River. See Attachment 1, Trail Vicinity Map.

The trail plan covers approximately 35 miles between communities. While the overall goal is a continuous north-south route, the plan also includes creating trail connections and loop trails that will accommodate more localized trips and connect to important local designations, as well as branch out to regional amenities. Since the trail is quite lengthy the trail plan is divided into six planning areas or "reaches". The segment through Paso Robles starts at the northern end of Reach 3 and continues northward to the southern end of Reach 5, see Attachment 2.

Project Goals

- **Regional Multi-Purpose Trail System** – Safe and fully integrated off-highway trail system between communities
- **Anza Tail Connection** – Federal designation and recognition for historical route
- **Regional Destination Recreation** - Opportunity for "Eco Tourism" for hiking, biking, horseback riding, bird watching and more
- **Regional River Restoration** – Opportunity for organized networks of river restoration groups for project construction and maintenance system support
- **Ecosystem Education** – Interconnected programs for watershed health & stewardship
- **Outdoor Classrooms** – "Hands-on" learning
- **"Follow the River – Follow the Dream" Art Program** – Inspirational river art program that provides beauty and learning opportunities along the river

- **Funding** – Leverage funding for plans and construction projects through multi-agency collaboration

Public Outreach

Over the past year, the project consultants and SLOCOG met with property owners, held workshops, and compiled information from a number of site studies to create the Draft Master Plan. Outreach efforts included:

- 3 Public Workshops (attendance varied between 50 – 100 people per workshop)
- 5 Steering Committee Meetings
- Numerous individual Stakeholder interviews
- Maintained a project website and social media
- Conducted a Trail Plan Survey on the website
- Completed a 35-mile site field review by consultants

Project Details

Four documents were produced as part of the overall master plan trail effort. These documents are available for viewing on the project website www.salinaserivertrail.com. These include: (1) an Existing Conditions Report; (2) Opportunities and Constraints Analysis; (3) Standards and Design Guidelines; and (4) Draft Master Plan, which includes trail types and trail alignments, an implementation plan and project prioritization.

The trail types relate to the type experience and user group it is planned for. Trail types include:

- Type 1 – Soft Surface Trails, unimproved natural surface trail in river channel, or firm natural surface trail at channel edge
- Type 2 – Firm Surface Trails, near river or above river bank
- Type 3 – On/Near Road Facilities: either on river bank or bicycle facility on roadway

The image in Figure 1 below provides a sectional view of the different types of trails and where they are planned within the river corridor. Permanent hard surface trail facilities such as asphalt or concrete are not intended to be constructed within river flood inundation areas where facilities would likely be washed out on a regular basis.

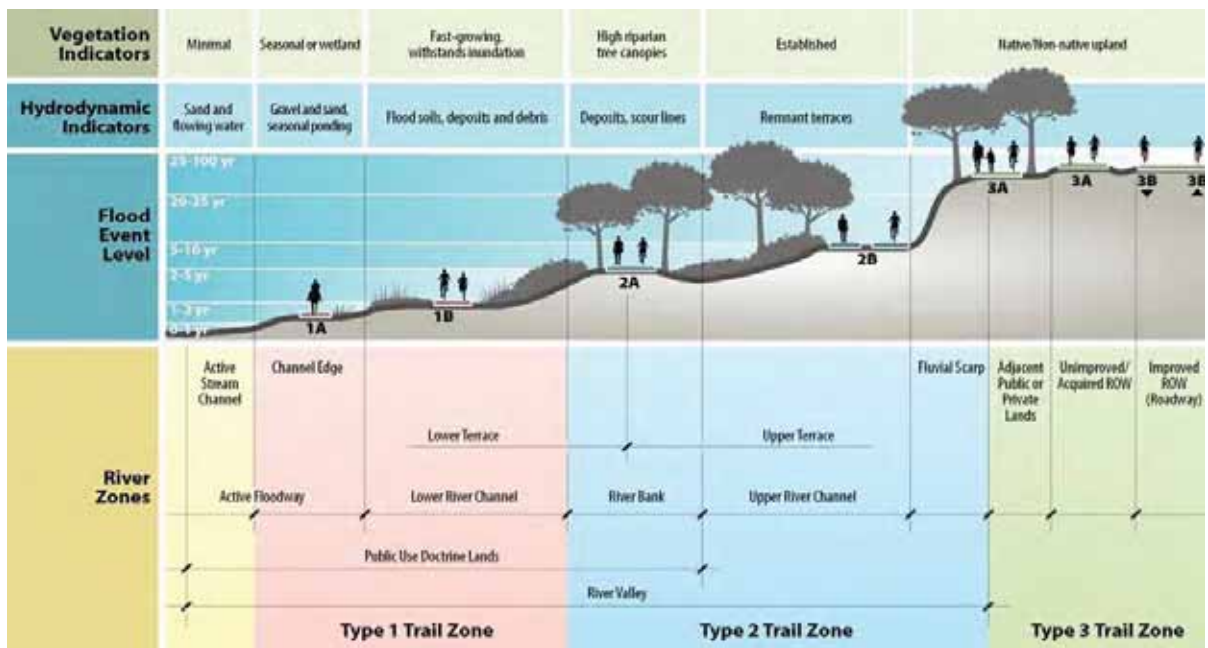


Figure 1 – Trail Definitions

Trail Routes

Trail routes were identified and ranked using a list of factors, including but not limited to:

- Ownership of lands
- Quality of the trail experience
- User comfort & safety
- Proximity to destinations, population & transportation routes
- Flood zones
- Costs
- Soils & landslide risks
- Vegetation impacts
- System connectivity & creation of looped trails

The biggest challenges with defining routes are related to avoiding private property wherever possible, and avoiding flooding along the Salinas River. In addition, other constraints or challenges include the Union Pacific Railroad, and the Caltrans right-of-way. The intention is to pursue trails on public lands and easements where possible, and only pursue trails on private property where property owners are willing and interested in selling or otherwise dedicating land voluntarily for trail alignments.

POLICY

REFERENCE: Salinas River Vision, Bicycle Master Plan, 2003 General Plan

FISCAL

IMPACT: The Salinas River Master Plan will not result in direct fiscal impacts. Future improvements would most likely be grant funded, however future improvements proposed would include evaluating funding options available at that time. Any future trail improvements would also include a fiscal analysis of trail maintenance costs.

OPTIONS: The City Council is requested to take one of the actions listed below:

- a. Direct staff to prepare a City Council letter of support, for the Mayors' signature, for the Draft Salinas River Trail Master Plan to SLOCOG; or
- b. Amend, modify or reject the foregoing option.

Attachments:

1. Trail Plan Vicinity Map
2. Planning Area Reaches
3. Trail Reaches through Paso Robles

