



FRONT COUNTRY TRAILS

WORKING GROUP

Summer 2004

INTRODUCTION

As populations of user groups on the local urban interface trail system has been increasing over the years, safety issues and disputes are occurring and are expected to worsen unless management policies are proactive management policies are developed. The Front Country Trails Working Group (FCTWG) was formed to address these issues and develop recommendations to the different agencies that manage these recreational resources.

It is the desire of the FCTWG that your agency evaluates and implements the following consensus recommendations we have developed as a collaborative group of trails users and stewards.

BACKGROUND

In 2002, the FCTWG was formed to address trail user conflicts on the local front country trails. The proceedings have been hosted by the Los Padres Forest Association, a non-profit organization that is dedicated to the care and protection of the Los Padres National Forest by supporting stewardship and education of the public use of the forest in a sensitive and responsible manner.

Regular meetings have been held over the course of the last 24 months to discuss solutions to issues from the respective user groups. In attendance have been representatives from the different agencies to provide advice and guidance as to their roles and abilities to implement different management scenarios. Additionally, a consultant was hired to facilitate the meetings in an unbiased and productive manner.

Specifically, representatives of the hiking, equestrian, and biking communities brought forth their issues and ideas about how best to manage these valuable recreational resources by developing this mission statement and guiding principles:

The Front Country Trails Working Group serves as an advice-giving body to provide policy recommendations to the Forest Service, the City of Santa Barbara, and the County of Santa Barbara as they pertain to the front country trails and its recreational resources.

The goal of the FCTWG is to encourage management policy decisions that:

- *Improve safety*
- *Protect natural and cultural resources*
- *Provide trail opportunities for an increasing population of recreational users*
- *Are feasible to implement*

PARTICIPATION

FCTWG participation was comprised of the following distinct recreational user groups:

- Mountain Bikers
- Equestrians
- Hikers

SCOPE

The geographical extent of the FTWG has been defined as:

Those official trails located on the Los Padres National Forest system and the City of Santa Barbara watershed lands bounded by East Camino Cielo to the north and the City of Santa Barbara to the south.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Each member of the FCTWG agreed to the following MOU as a guideline for creating a productive environment where consensus was possible.

As a member of the FCTWG I agree to put forth a good faith effort to attend all monthly meeting. Furthermore, I will conduct myself in such a way as to promote the purpose of the meetings and work to achieve its goals.

I understand and agree with the purpose, participants, structure, scope and resources of the group. Additionally, it is my intent to work within the process set forward by the FTCWG. Any outside activities that may conflict with the goals and objective of this process or any attempts toward frothing my groups or individual agenda, other than in this setting will jeopardize my participation.

FCTWG COLLABERATIVE MANAGEMENT PROPOSAL

In August of 2004 the members of the FCTWG drafted the following proposal for your consideration. This was a collaborative effort based on consensus agreements by all members of the group. These recommendations represent months of research and hours of hard work and compromise by all involved.

It should be noted that the basic principles of this proposal recognizes that the front country trails are part of a larger system that faces the same issues and could act as a model for addressing not only the issues faced on the front country trails but address issues to other trails in the Los Padres system.

Front Country Trails Proposal Adopted August 23, 2004

THE VISION

This management approach seeks to develop an interconnected, non-motorized trail system that contains trails where design allows for mixed uses (such as hiking and horseback riding, biking and hiking, or any combination of the three) along with some trails reserved for the use of specific user groups (i.e. hiking only – single use trails).

THE MISSION

To develop both short- and long-term solutions that provide a means for eliminating the safety and environmental concerns of the various trail user groups along with the development of a Trails Alliance composed of local individuals, organizations and agencies. The Trails Alliance will serve as an advisory committee that will develop a trail master plan for the front country and monitor the management of the plan in the future.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

- **The issues relating to the front country trails include safety and environmental concerns**, trail conditions, trail access issues and the long-term ability of our community to maintain and protect our trails.
- **These concerns require a collaborative partnership to develop interim measures, long-range solutions** and the organizational support to enable us to care for our trails and expand our trail network.
- **Interim solutions the FCTWG proposes to the agencies should be made within the framework of the long-range solutions** and be supportive of them.

- **Current trail users should continue to work together, developing new routes and maintain existing routes** in the Santa Ynez Mountains to meet existing and future needs and address the concerns of the trail user community.
- **All trail users have a legitimate right to an expectation of safety on the trails.** As new trail access is developed to meet trail user needs, it can be expected we will negotiate to limit the access of some trails to address safety concerns.

INTERIM / LONG-RANGE SOLUTIONS

- **Create a Trails Alliance composed of the leading outdoor & environmental groups, with the public agencies** to develop a Front Country/Santa Ynez Mountain Master Plan. Propose a two year schedule for the development of the Master Plan that will include planning, mapping, and funding of the new trail system. At the end of this time period it will be the goal of the Trails Alliance to break ground on new trail(s).
- **Develop a trail signage and education program** with small bird-house type signs at the top of the front country trails and larger kiosk-type signboards at the bottoms. Develop educational and informational brochures, trail information flyers and signs and a “rules of the road” for trail users. Establish clear trail etiquette guidelines for all groups.
- **Develop a volunteer “trail host” program**, with volunteers at trailheads and on the trails to act as “trail stewards” to help ensure our trails are protected and people are educated.
- **Adopt for a period of two years an odd-even plan for mountain bikes**, meaning that mountain bikes may only use front country trails on either the even or odd days of the year. During this period, a review of the plan's effectiveness in ameliorating user conflict and safety issues will be used to help develop the long-range trail management policies of the Master Plan.