

**COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO
CALIFORNIA**

For the Agenda of:
7/18/2014

To: American River Parkway Advisory Committee

From: Jeffrey R. Leatherman, Director

Subject: Proposed Abandonment Of Select Trail Easements In The Curragh Downs Community Along The American River Parkway

Supervisory
District: Peters

Contact: Jeffrey R. Leatherman 875-6132

Overview

In 1974 the County of Sacramento accepted trail easements as a condition of approval for a subdivision commonly known as Curragh Downs. Since that time the Department of Regional Parks (Regional Parks) has maintained a portion of the trail easements which provide access to the American River Parkway. After review of the existing easements owned by the County, the Department of Regional Parks is requesting consideration by the Board of Supervisors for the abandonment of certain trail easements in the Curragh Downs community.

Recommendation

Approve staff's recommendation to abandon certain trail easements as identified in Attachment A and forward staff's recommendation to the Recreation and Park Commission for approval.

Measures/Evaluation

Not applicable.

Fiscal Impact

There is no fiscal impact to the Department.

BACKGROUND

The acquisition of property by the County of Sacramento around the Curragh Downs community began in 1968 for inclusion in the American River Parkway. Additional property was acquired in the following years and totals approximately 375 acres of the American River Parkway (Attachment D). This portion of the Parkway is commonly known as the Sailor Bar Recreation Area and is located near the Hazel Avenue bridge crossing of the American River. In 1973, the property owners of the Curragh Downs community granted trail easements on their privately owned property for the purpose of hiking and horseback riding through the Curragh Downs community onto the American River Parkway. The trail easements provided access from Hazel

Avenue through the community and connected to the equestrian/hiking trail on the American River Parkway.

The Department has made many attempts to maintain the trails, however over the years, through transfer of ownership and other circumstances some of the trail easements have been blocked by homeowners. Vegetation, fences, concrete and other structures were erected by homeowners effectively blocking trails and access to trails. Over the past 20 years the Department has made attempts to restore access in certain locations but has been unsuccessful at maintaining access on many of the original trail easements dedicated in 1973.

DISCUSSION

In January of 2014, a complaint was raised by a community member alleging the County and the Department had abandoned their obligation to provide public access to the American River Parkway due to lack of maintenance and the failure to clear encroachments by property owners on the County owned easements. The Department surveyed the existing conditions and the history of the trail easements and found that with the exception of three access locations to the American River Parkway, the trails within the community of Curragh Downs were rarely used or were restricted by private property owners. The existing conditions report is included as Attachment C.

Regional Parks also determined that three of the trail easements originally provided to the County had been abandoned and returned to the property owners by the County in three separate Board actions. Attachment B represents the easements that had been abandoned by the County, (Board Resolution numbers 74-872, 76-739, and 93-0971, respectively).

Attachment A outlines the recommendations by the Department. Regional Parks is recommending that the Board of Supervisors take action to abandon all easements except four that are consistent with the access points identified in the ARP Plan. This recommendation is based on current access needs to the American River Parkway and feedback from community members on the actual use of the existing trails as well as an analysis of how the trails were intended to be used. These four access points provide the community a place to access the American River Parkway. The remaining easements do not provide relevant access to recreation, trails or open space and the Department is recommending the County abandon the remaining easements.

The recommendation is consistent with the Sailor Bar land use map (Attachment D) of the American River Parkway Plan (ARP Plan); three of these access points are in the Curragh Downs Community. As an element of the Sacramento County General Plan, the ARP Plan Area Plan Maps provide current and future access locations, improvements and existing facilities in the American River Parkway.

Hazel Avenue Trail Easements

The Hazel Avenue trail easements are adjacent to the Curragh Downs community. The Department is recommending the County retain the easements along Hazel Avenue until the Hazel Avenue widening project is complete. After project completion, the Department will work

with the County Department of Transportation to evaluate the future of any remaining easements along Hazel Avenue.

Community Outreach

The Department of Regional Parks has met with individual members of the Curragh Downs community. During the course of the meetings many individuals explained that the current internal trail network (trails with no direct access to the Parkway) have been blocked for many years and in some cases homeowners purchased homes with the encroachments already in place. These conditions make it problematic for the Department to maintain the existing easements and confusing for the homeowners about who is ultimately responsible for the trails, trail maintenance and trail liability.

The Department presented the preliminary review of the Curragh Downs trail recommendations to the American River Parkway Advisory Committee on June 20, 2014 as an informational item and to receive preliminary feedback on the proposed recommendation.

MEASURES/EVALUATION

Not applicable.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

There is no fiscal impact to the Department.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffrey R. Leatherman, Director
Sacramento County Regional Parks

Attachments:

- ATT A Curragh Downs: Department Recommendation
- ATT B Curragh Downs: Original PLAT map
- ATT C Curragh Downs: Existing Conditions Report
- ATT D Curragh Downs: Sailor Bar Area Plan Map
- ATT E: Official Legal Description