



NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

FILING REQUESTED BY AND WHEN FILED, RETURN TO:

Marin County Parks and Open Space District
3501 Civic Center Drive, Suite 260, San Rafael, CA 94903
www.marincountyparks.org
(415) 473-6387

FILED

10/30/2024

To: Marin County Clerk
3501 Civic Center Drive, Suite 234
San Rafael, CA 94903

Date: October 30, 2024

Project Title: **Back Meadow Trail Improvement Project**

Project Location: Stafford Lake Park, Novato, Marin County, California

Assessor Parcel: 125-090-19

SHELLY SCOTT
MARIN COUNTY CLERK
By J. Cruz, Deputy
21 - 2024 - 188

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of the Project: The purposes of the proposed project are to provide a sustainable trail system venue for interscholastic cross-country and mountain bike events for Marin County's middle school and high school students and to improve access for rangers and emergency responders on foot or using small all-terrain vehicles to the Back Meadow area of Stafford Lake Park and the existing Disc Golf Course.

Back Meadow Trail: The proposed Back Meadow Trail segment would extend from the existing Terwilliger Trail and provide a natural surfaced hiking and cycling path through the disc golf course area. The trail length would be 2 miles, it would vary in width from 2-feet to 6-feet, with an average gradient of 4 percent. The Back Meadow Trail would provide one-way travel for cyclists. Trail design elements would include climbing turns, insloped turns, chicanes, and rock gardens. The Back Meadow Trail would cross one ephemeral stream utilizing a bridge, one run-out gully from a hillslope debris slide in a colluvial hollow utilizing a puncheon, and would traverse a low-gradient convex hillslope between two isolated hillside seeps utilizing an elevated boardwalk. These structural trail elements would all be top-of-bank to top-of-bank and would not affect the ephemeral stream, gully, or hillside seeps. No trees or sensitive vegetation would be removed. For these reasons, no regulatory permit authorizations are required.

The existing disc golf course layout would be slightly reconfigured to improve integration of the course with the trail, including relocation of some disc golf targets (baskets), removing one tee, and adding two additional tees to direct disc flights (throws) away from the trail corridor. These changes would improve disc golf course playability, improve user safety, and lessen the chances for conflict between trail users and disc golfers. New signage would be installed at each trailhead and trail intersection to indicate use and direction of travel where applicable.

Bridge Crossing: The proposed bridge would be located above the 100-year flood elevation spanning above both banks of the ephemeral stream. It would be 16-feet in length, 6-feet in width, and 4-feet in height with steel girder structural framing and wood decking, constructed based on engineering plans developed for Marin County Parks. Concrete foundations would be set beyond the top of the stream banks and the bridge would be bolted to the concrete foundation. Cut and fill volumes for the bridge foundations would balance in that the soil excavated for the footings would be replaced by concrete, and the excavated soil would be off-hauled and utilized on other parts of the trail. All excavation associated with the bridge foundations would occur beyond the top of bank and outside the stream channel.

Puncheon Crossing: The proposed puncheon crossing the run-out gully from a hillslope debris slide would be constructed using a steel girder structural framing and wood decking, would be 8-feet in length, 6-feet in width, and would have a maximum of 30-inches vertical drop from the puncheon deck to the ground, measured at the gully thalweg, therefore a bull rail or kick-plate would be installed along the puncheon edges rather than a railing system.

Boardwalk: The proposed boardwalk would cross two isolated hillside seeps located on a low-gradient convex hillslope. It would be 50-feet in length and 6-feet in width, constructed of steel framing and redwood decking. The boardwalk would be affixed to diamond pier foundations or similar to elevate the boardwalk above the ground surface. Diamond pier foundation units are relatively simple to install, require no excavation, and no additional concrete.

Setting: Stafford Lake Park encompasses 139 acres of land on the western shores of Stafford Lake, a drinking water reservoir managed by North Marin Water District near the City of Novato. The land for the park was acquired by the County in 1971. The Park provides picnic areas, playgrounds, a bike park, event areas, shore fishing opportunities, walking trails and a disc golf course. Plant and wildlife surveys have been completed in the project area.¹ Vegetation in the project area includes a diverse mix of alliances, with *Umbellularia californica* being the most abundant forest and woodland plant community. *Quercus lobata* and *Quercus agrifolia* alliance forest and woodland plant communities are also present. Grassland communities include *Avena* ssp.

¹ Botanical Assessment of the Stafford Lake Park Trail Improvement Project. Julian Geoghegan, Marin County Parks Vegetation Specialist, November 2023.

Bromus spp. and *Lolium perenne* Semi-Natural Alliances, and *Festuca arundinacea* Association. The proposed project would not remove or otherwise damage trees and avoids impacts to swaths of mature native bunchgrasses. No special status wildlife species occur in the project area. Isolated fragrant fritillary (*fritillaria liliacea*) and bristly Leptosiphon (*Leptosiphon aureus*) populations around the existing disc golf course were identified and subsequently fenced off. The proposed project was specifically designed to avoid known populations of *Fritillaria*. Marin County Parks is using this project as an opportunity to reduce impacts to the species by rerouting trails, relocating disc golf infrastructure, and building exclusionary fencing. *Leptosiphon* prefers disturbed, compacted soil and appears to rely on steady foot traffic to maintain ideal habitat conditions. Visitor use of the proposed project may influence the distribution and abundance of *Leptosiphon* in the project area. Marin County Parks would continue to monitor populations of *Fritillaria* and *Leptosiphon* and implement adaptive management measures, if needed, to avoid declines in these plant populations. Neither of these species are protected under the California or Federal Endangered Species Act, however they are considered a California Rare Plant.

Construction: Project implementation is planned for 2025 as soon as soil moisture conditions allow and after pre-construction surveys determined that sensitive species are not present in the project area. Construction would occur Monday through Friday, from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and would require approximately six months. Construction related to water crossings and earthwork requiring use of equipment would be limited to the dry season, generally between May and October. Equipment would include trail dozers, mini-excavators, loaders, compactors, cement mixers, rubber track carriers, generators, ATVs, jackhammers, power saws, and other hand tools. Access to the project site for construction equipment would be through the main gate at Stafford Lake Park at Novato Boulevard. Construction staging areas would be restricted to existing Stafford Lake Park property and would avoid impacts on sensitive natural resources including sensitive habitats, plant, or animal species. During construction, trails within the project area would be closed for recreation for safety purposes. Emergency access would be maintained during construction.

Operation and Maintenance: After project construction, recreation on the Back Meadow Trail would follow the proposed designated uses. Trail use is expected to increase as the trail would be more comprehensive and accommodating to multiple user groups. The increase in use is anticipated to be locally driven by Marin County residents. The Back Meadow Trail would be maintained by Stafford Lake Park staff. As the trail is sustainably designed, the level of maintenance is expected to be low. Regular maintenance would include brushing of the trail corridor, maintaining trail surface and drainage and clearing fallen trees and trail obstructions as needed.

Public Agency Approving Project: Marin County Parks

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out the Project: Chris Chamberlain, Interim Director

Reasons for Exemption: Marin County Parks has reviewed the project along with its environmental setting and has determined it to be categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act under the following sections of the California Administrative Code:

Section 15304: Minor Alterations to Land The proposed project consists of the minor alteration of an existing public facility which would not involve removal of health, mature, scenic trees. Grading would be on land with a slope of less than 10 percent and would not occur in a waterway, wetland, an officially designated scenic area, or in an officially mapped area of severe geologic hazard. The proposed bridge, puncheon, and boardwalk would span features top-of-bank to top-of-bank and no work would occur within the features. The proposed project is not located on a hazardous waste site pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5. The project area is not located within an officially designated state scenic highway and nonetheless would not affect scenic resources including trees, historical buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources. Implementation of the proposed project would not result in a significant effect to the environment due to unusual circumstances; or change the significance of a historical resource. There are no known cultural resources within the project area. Should any be discovered during project implementation, Best Management Practices would be implemented including work stoppage in the immediate area of the find and contacting the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria for guidance. Implementation of the proposed project would not result in cumulative impacts relative to other trail projects at Stafford Lake Park.

Lead Agency Contact Person:



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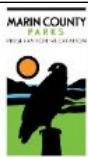
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NOTICE OF EXEMPTION – PROJECT LOCATION

Stafford Lake Park – Back Meadow Trail

October 30, 2024



PROPOSED BACK MEADOW TRAIL STAFFORD LAKE PARK, MARIN COUNTY, CA



Legend

- Existing Trail Segment
- Proposed Trail Segment
- SOS = Start of Survey
- IS = Inslped Turn
- BDWK = Boardwalk
- PCHN = Puncheon
- EOS = End of Survey
- CT = Climbing Turn
- RG = Rock Garden
- BRIDGE = Bridge
- CHCN = Chicane

Date Exported: 10/6/2021 11:18 AM
Sources: MCGIS (parcels), GGNPC (Imagery)

This map is for illustrative purposes only and is not intended to be a definitive property description.

