

Memorandum

TO: TREATMENT PLANT ADVISORY
COMMITTEE

FROM: Kerrie Romanow

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: March 10, 2020

INFORMATION

SUBJECT: VALLEY WATER'S PROPOSED PLAN FOR THE SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO BAY SHORELINE LEVEE TRAIL

This memorandum provides information from Valley Water regarding the proposed trails as part of the South San Francisco Bay Shoreline Levee Project (Shoreline Project) (Attachment).

BACKGROUND

On November 12, the City of San Jose's Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Department's (PRNS) staff presented to the Treatment Plant Advisory Committee (TPAC) an overview of a study being prepared for trail systems in the Alviso Area; titled "Highway 237 Bikeway Trail Feasibility Study & SF Bay Trail Alignment Confirmation". This study, funded via a grant from the Coastal Conservancy, documents viable options for extending both trail systems in the Alviso / North San José area. The study is generally consistent with Valley Water's Plan but is conceptual in nature and does not address future environmental or engineering studies required for further design and construction. TPAC unanimously accepted staff's report, which is posted on the Trail Program website at:

<https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showdocument?id=54555>

On February 13, 2020, staff briefed TPAC on the proposed sale of Pond A18 to Valley Water as part of the Shoreline Project. As a result, TPAC requested clarification on Valley Water's plan for associated trails. Valley Water has provided the attached memo summarizing recreational elements of the Shoreline Project.

ANALYSIS

The City, as the Administering Agency for the San José-Santa Clara Regional Wastewater Facility (RWF), has not fully reviewed the proposed trail plans to determine actions or

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Subject: Shoreline Levee Project Trails Plan

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conditions that must occur first. For example, Valley Water and the City of San José Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services (PRNS) Department staff may have had preliminary discussions on these trail plans, but no firm commitments were made by either party. However, the RWF does not know how these plans intersect with facility operation, or what types of easements, additional improvements, environmental review, and other permits might be involved with implementation as a result of those plans. Therefore, this memo is being provided for informational purposes only and is not an indication of or request for approval.

NEXT STEPS

ESD staff will continue to coordinate with Valley Water and other sponsors of the Shoreline Project, as well as with PRNS, who is similarly collaborating with those agencies with respect to developing the trail plan. Staff will come back to TPAC with periodic updates, as needed, and for final direction or approval on any eventual property transaction(s).

COORDINATION

The Attorney's Office and PRNS were consulted for the preparation of this report.

/s/

KERRIE ROMANOW

Director, Environmental Services

For questions, please contact Jennifer Voccola-Brown, Interim Sustainability and Compliance Manager, at (408) 975-2594.

Attachment: Memo from Valley Water: Shoreline Project Recreational Summary



MEMORANDUM

FC 14 (08-21-19)

TO: Jennifer Brown, Interim Sustainability & Compliance Manager, City of San Jose

FROM: Sunshine V. Julian, Capital Engineering Manager

SUBJECT: Shoreline Project Recreational Summary

DATE: March 5, 2020

Overall Pond A18 recreational summary

Project trails in and around Pond A18 do not currently exist. Refer to Attachment 1. The maintenance road constructed on top of the flood protection levee alignment will become a Bay Trail alignment, providing over three miles of new public access trail in Pond A18 where there is currently no access. This alignment will continue on existing berms to connect with the Coyote Creek/Bay Trail at North McCarthy Blvd. When completed, this new trail will allow direct connection, that currently does not exist, to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Environmental Education Center (EEC) and to the Alviso Marina.

The Shoreline Project (project) also proposes to continue a 1.4-mile bicycle trail parallel with State Route 237. Refer to Attachment 2. Constructing a pedestrian/bicycle trail adjacent to State Route 237 will fulfill a request from the public to separate bicycle commuters from the wildlife viewing activities along the levee-top trail in order to minimize user conflicts. Furthermore, constructing additional trail miles and improving key connections will help offset some of the trail miles lost to re-configuring the Ponds A9-A15 loop trail and improve trail connections to the community of Alviso.

Recreation Elements

The project includes a maintenance road along the crest of the new levee, which will be made available for pedestrian traffic from the Alviso Marina to the Coyote Creek Bypass. This trail will be made compatible under the management of the USFWS Refuge (for segments on Refuge property) or a local entity (for Pond A18 via joint use agreement for trails with City of San Jose). To cross the active railroad, a 380-foot-long pedestrian bridge was proposed with Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant approaches on either side. The railroad pedestrian bridge would be near the northeast corner of Pond A13 and southwest corner of Pond A16. At Artesian Slough, a pedestrian crossing was proposed over the tide gate structure. At the eastern terminus of the levee, the trail would connect to a designated route generally following existing roads and berms and connect with the existing bridge at McCarthy Boulevard. The existing pedestrian walkway on McCarthy bridge would take recreationists to the Coyote Creek Trail (which is also the Bay Trail in this area) that runs along the east bank of the creek.

The tidal wetland restoration proposed by the project would impact the existing non-engineered berms around the ponds. As the ponds are breached, the trail will move closer to the new levee, with the final alignment including an out-and-back trail with spurs to overlook platforms. Retaining the existing non-engineered berms in their current configurations would require maintaining the existing salt pond berms in place and bridging all proposed breaches. While technically feasible, surrounding the marsh with trails would have substantial impacts to sensitive tidal marsh species. Furthermore, maintaining the existing berms for trails would add to the project operation and maintenance cost, preclude their use as borrow sites and would not allow the project to create high-tide islands or pickleweed marsh on the former berms, an action that would enhance wildlife habitat. For these reasons, bridging the breaches was not retained for further analysis in the alternatives and the project proposes that, for the most part, the trails that would be retained would be concentrated on the new levee to minimize the adverse

impacts of human/wildlife interactions. This would ensure compatibility with wildlife and habitat created as a result of restoration while maintaining public access to the shoreline.

Overall, berm breaches for ecosystem restoration would result in a reduction of about 7.4 miles of trails; however, with the addition of trail along Pond A18 (additional 3.3 miles) and a proposed trail parallel with State Route 237 (1.6 miles), the net loss would be about 2.2 miles. The new trail just north of State Route 237 would create a paved multi-use trail that provides connection at a current gap in the multi-use network between its current terminus at Zanker Road to the community of Alviso. In addition, the new trails would connect to the regional trail network and link the visitor serving facilities in the region. Finally, viewing platforms, interpretive signs, and benches would be installed along existing and new trails in the study area.

Engage youth and young adults

The project will provide enhanced opportunities for public access, environmental education, and recreation associated with the restored habitat and is in an area of vital educational and recreational open space with its proximity to the County Alviso Marina Park, Refuge and the EEC. The project will improve access to the EEC, which receives approximately 733,000 visitors each year, and the adjacent New Chicago Marsh Trail receives an estimated 8,200 visits each year. The project's recreation features are estimated to increase the annual number of visitors to the Refuge and EEC by 20 percent. Preliminary results from the 2014 trail user survey indicate that the primary user groups for this trail are organized educational groups ranging from elementary through college age (approximately 66 percent). The project's educational signs and viewing platforms will provide youth and young adults with information regarding the tidal marsh ecosystem, environmental stewardship, and conservation. The project will also provide connections to the County Alviso Marina Park, which offers educational public boat rides through the Alviso Slough and educational signage depicting the area's history to share how the South San Francisco Bay shoreline has changed over time.

Planning Process Background

In regards to the planning process (2005-2015), the Shoreline Project had numerous public meetings, usually in conjunction with the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project. At no time during this process was the idea of using the entire loop around Pond A18 for public access raised. As mentioned above, the main public concern was regarding pedestrian (particularly school and bird-watching groups) conflicts with bicyclists along the Bay Trail alignment. For this reason, completing the bike trail parallel with Highway 237 was incorporated in order to provide an alternative to bicyclists and reduce these potential conflicts.

During this time, the RWF also had a Plant Master Plan process that included an EIR. Dean Stanford commented regarding State Park's interest in a multiple-use park (Comment DS1-1). The response from the RWF was "The City does not anticipate that motorized vehicles would be allowed on the proposed trail network." In addition, in response to Comment DS1-7, the City acknowledged the idea to use the outer pond levee for a trail and responded "the Draft EIR (Figure 3-17, page 3-58) shows that, while it would not circle the entirety of Pond A18, an inboard levee-top trail is proposed along the southern edge of the current Pond A18."

Given the concern about pedestrian and bicyclist conflicts (which could be heightened with ebikes) and the impacts of a trail encircling tidal wetland habitat, the Shoreline Project did not recommend creating a trail around the entirety of Pond A18.

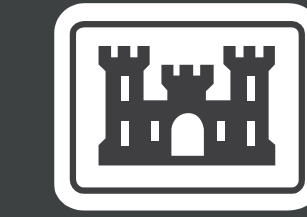
Attachment 1: Existing Recreation and Public Access Map

Attachment 2: Post-Project Recreation and Public Access Map

South San Francisco Bay Shoreline Project

Existing Recreation and Public Access

Economic Impact Area 11

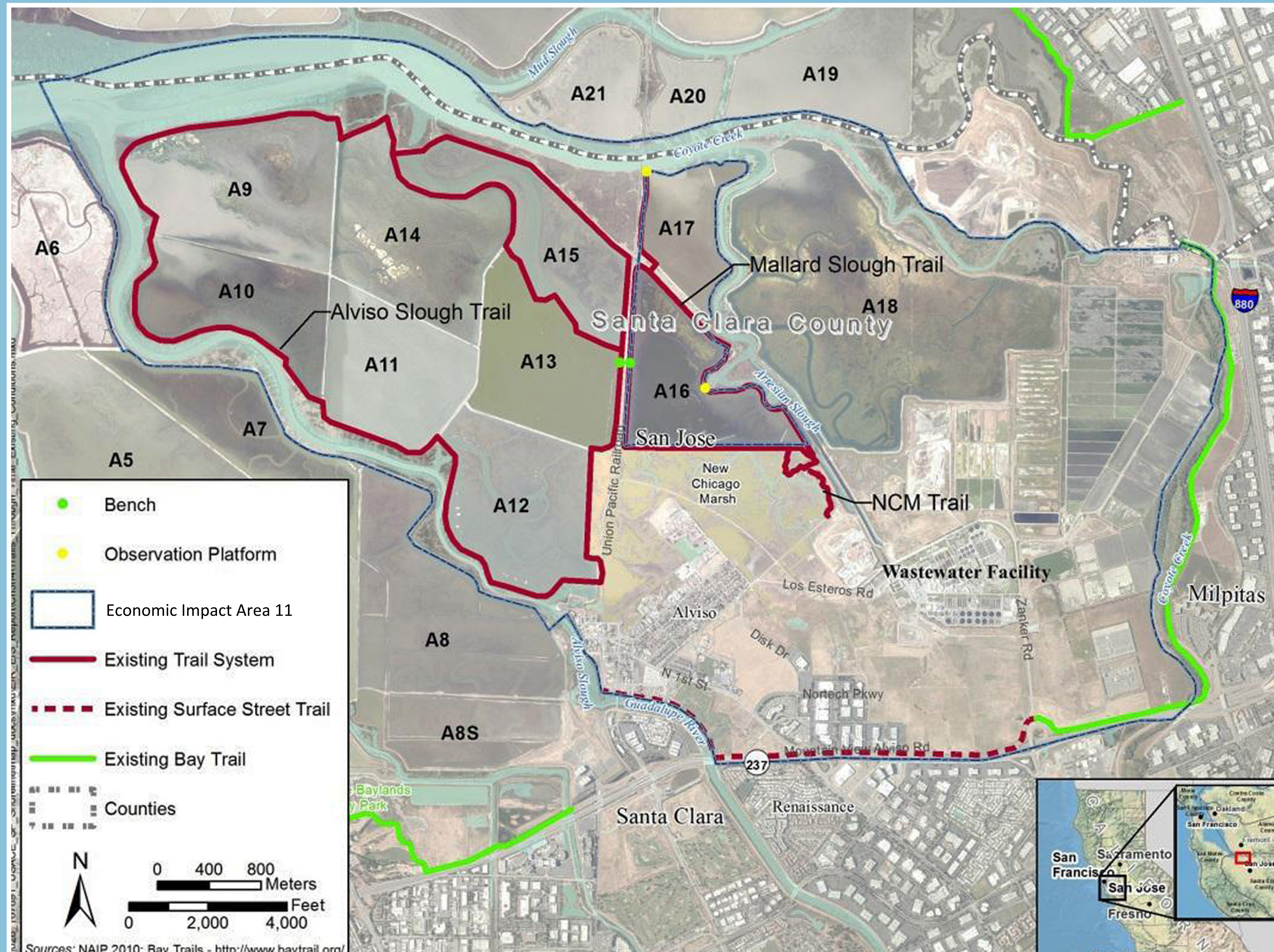


US Army Corps of Engineers.



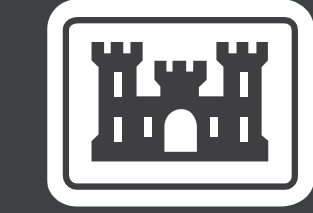
Coastal Conservancy

Santa Clara Valley Water District



South San Francisco Bay Shoreline Project

Post-Project Recreation and Public Access Economic Impact Area 11



US Army Corps
of Engineers.



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Santa Clara Valley
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