



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 2/25/2020

File #: 20-102

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Public Works

Agenda Section: Time Certain Matter

SUBJECT:

10:00 a.m. - Volunteer Trail Stewards Program and Humboldt Bay Trail Fund

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Receive a staff report on the Volunteer Trail Stewards program and Humboldt Bay Trail Fund;
2. Receive comments from the public; and
3. Approve, and authorize the Public Works Director to execute, the attached memorandum of understanding with the Humboldt Trails Council regarding implementation of the Volunteer Trail Stewards program on county-maintained trails.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

Bicycles & Trailways Program (1710715); Forest Resources & Recreation - McKay Community Forest (1710716)

DISCUSSION:

This agenda item provides an update on community initiatives to provide volunteer and financial support for regional trails and transmits a proposed memorandum of understanding with the Humboldt Trails Council regarding implementation of the Volunteer Trail Stewards program on current and future county-maintained trails.

Volunteer Trail Stewards

The Trails Trust of Humboldt Bay was founded in 2004 as a group of local residents advocating for a regional multi-use trail system that would connect the Hammond Trail, Annie and Mary Trail and Humboldt Bay Trail and complete the California Coastal Trail in the Humboldt Bay region. This organization changed its name to the Humboldt Trails Council in 2010 and expanded its scope to serve as a unified voice supporting development and use of trails for recreation and transportation throughout Humboldt County. In 2011, the Humboldt Trails Council developed the following vision statement:

The Humboldt Trails Council envisions a well-maintained network of accessible community pathways traveled by walkers and riders of all abilities, ages and means in the pursuit of unfettered kinetic joy. We are advocates, educators and coordinators working to enhance the

county's active transportation and recreation options, community wellbeing, economic vitality, visitor captivation and appreciation of open spaces.

One of the longstanding programs of the Humboldt Trails Council is the Volunteer Trail Stewards program, which coordinates an average of approximately one hundred (100) volunteers each month to provide support to public agencies and land trusts with maintaining and building trails. The Volunteer Trail Stewards are active at Arcata Community Forest, the City of Arcata's Humboldt Bay Trail North segment, Eureka Waterfront Trail, Hammond Trail, Humboldt Coastal Nature Center, Freshwater Farms Reserve, Mad River Bluffs and Chah GAH Cho trails in McKinleyville and Lacks Creek Management Area. In 2019, the Volunteer Trail Stewards provided a total of three thousand six hundred forty-seven (3,647) volunteer hours, including five hundred thirty-nine (539) hours on the Hammond Trail, for an estimated value of Ninety-Two Thousand Seven Hundred Fifty Dollars (\$92,750).

The Volunteer Trail Stewards program has provided assistance to the County of Humboldt with monthly organized workdays on the Hammond Trail in McKinleyville for nearly ten (10) years. The Humboldt County Parks division plans work activities, supervises workdays and provides tools and materials. Volunteers perform activities such as picking up garbage and litter, clearing debris, restoring trail surfaces, cutting and trimming vegetation, pruning native plants, removing invasive plants, improving drainage, implementing erosion and sediment control measures, repairing and painting structures (such as benches, fences, railings and steps), cleaning signs and removing graffiti. This volunteer assistance has significantly improved the safety and comfort of the trail and increased the overall level of maintenance, which extends the longevity of trail facilities and reduces long-term costs. The Volunteer Trail Stewards program is also capable of constructing new unpaved trails. For the past seven (7) years, volunteers from the program have built or rehabilitated several miles of trails in the Arcata Community Forest and Sunny Brae Forest. Many of the volunteers have received training in trail-building methods and have significant trail-building experience. Both experienced and new volunteers are expected to provide a significant source of volunteer labor for constructing trails in the McKay Community Forest following the Board of Supervisors' adoption of the McKay Community Forest Trail Plan later this year.

The purpose of today's recommended action is to formalize a memorandum of understanding (Attachment 1) between the Humboldt Trails Council and the County of Humboldt in order to confirm roles and responsibilities, anticipated services, insurance requirements and lines of communication.

In addition to sponsoring the Volunteer Trail Stewards program, the Humboldt Trails Council shares information about trails in Humboldt County through a website (www.humtrails.org <<http://www.humtrails.org>>), social media, quarterly e-Newsletter and trail summits. The fourth Humboldt Trail Summit is scheduled for June 6, 2020, at the Sequoia Conference Center in Eureka.

Humboldt Bay Trail Fund

The Humboldt Bay Trail Fund was established in 2017 by a group of community trail advocates to provide financial support for the creation and maintenance of multi-purpose trails around Humboldt Bay. The fund was established in response to the lack of sustainable funding for trail maintenance

which has been a limiting factor for the expansion of regional trails. The fund was also intended to promote community involvement and to enhance connections between community members and the Humboldt Bay Trail. Funding priorities are: (1) maintenance and rehabilitation, with an emphasis on projects involving community volunteers; (2) emergency repair projects; (3) trail amenities; and (4) cost-sharing with state or federal grant funds for project development and/or construction. This fund provides a level of financial security to public agencies for expanding the regional trail network and increasing their responsibility for trail maintenance.

The Humboldt Bay Trail Fund is administered by the Humboldt Area Foundation to generate investment earnings. Outreach for donations is supported by a working group of trail advocates. At the end of Dec. 2019, the fund balance was Three Hundred Seventy-One Thousand Seven Hundred Twenty-Five Dollars (\$371,725). Donations have been received from over four hundred fifty (450) individuals, families, businesses and other organizations along with many hundreds of donations from promotional events at Eureka Natural Foods, Wildberries and other venues. The working group has a fundraising goal to reach a fund balance of Five Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$500,000) before the start of construction of the Humboldt Bay Trail South project.

Decisions to allocate funds are made by the Humboldt Bay Trail Fund Committee, which is composed of four (4) community members and representatives from the City of Arcata, City of Eureka, and County of Humboldt. Proposals for fund allocations are solicited annually. Over the last two (2) years, the committee has allocated a total of Thirteen Thousand One Hundred Fifty Dollars (\$13,150) to support the Volunteer Trail Stewards program in assisting with maintenance on Arcata's Humboldt Bay Trail North segment and the Eureka Waterfront Trail.

A flier summarizing the Humboldt Bay Trail Fund is provided in Attachment 2. The guidance document describing the background, priorities, and governance structure is provided in Attachment 3.

Humboldt Bay Trail Update

The Humboldt Bay Trail is being developed as a network of linked trail projects (Attachment 4) and as a collaborative effort between the Humboldt County Association of Governments, County of Humboldt, City of Arcata, City of Eureka, the California Department of Transportation, California State Coastal Conservancy, North Coast Railroad Authority, Humboldt Trails Council, Timber Heritage Association, Redwood Community Action Agency and other partners. In 2018, the City of Arcata completed the Humboldt Bay Trail North segment, which extends through the city and south along the Highway 101 and railroad corridor to an end point located near Bayside Cutoff and Bracut Industrial Park. The City of Arcata is currently developing a proposed project to construct an approximately three and three tenths (3.3) mile segment of the Annie and Mary Trail that would connect the northern extent of the Humboldt Bay Trail to the Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District's Park 1 on the Mad River. Also in 2018, the City of Eureka completed the Eureka Waterfront Trail from Myrtle town to Pound Road near Elk River. The City of Eureka is currently developing a proposed project to extend the Eureka Waterfront Trail approximately one (1) mile southward to a new trailhead located along Tooby Road, near King Salmon.

The County of Humboldt is currently leading the Humboldt Bay Trail South project which will provide the interconnecting link between the Eureka Waterfront Trail and Humboldt Bay Trail North segment,

creating a continuous non-motorized trail from central Arcata to the southern end of Eureka for a total length of nearly fourteen (14) miles. The Humboldt Bay Trail South project will construct a paved, ten (10) foot wide, multi-use path along four and two tenths (4.2) miles of the Eureka-Arcata Highway 101 and railroad corridor. The project includes urgent repairs to the rock-slope protection along segments of the railroad which have suffered erosion damage. Construction funding was allocated by the California Transportation Commission through the state Active Transportation Program in 2019. The current goal is to acquire right-of-way and permits by the end of 2020 and initiate construction in the spring of 2021.

In addition to serving the region's transportation needs, completion of the Humboldt Bay Trail between Eureka and Arcata will enhance coastal access and achieve a critical link in the California Coastal Trail. The Humboldt Bay Trail and Annie and Mary Trail will also provide segments of the Great Redwood Trail being led by Senator McGuire and help implement the local Climate Action Plan by supporting non-motorized transportation between the two largest cities in Humboldt County.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The proposed memorandum of understanding specifies that the County of Humboldt will provide financial support to the Volunteer Trail Stewards program in the amount of One Hundred Dollars (\$100) per twenty (20) hours of reported volunteer service time during organized workdays, up to a maximum contribution of Three Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$3,500) annually. Funds to provide financial support for volunteer work on the Hammond Trail are available in the fiscal year 2019-2020 budget for Bicycles & Trailways. Financial support for work by the Volunteer Trail Stewards program on the Hammond Trail in future fiscal years will be incorporated into the proposed budgets, relying on annual revenues received through the Transportation Development Act. Financial support for work within the McKay Community Forest in future fiscal years will be incorporated into the proposed budgets, relying on timber harvest revenues.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:

The recommended actions support the Board of Supervisors' Strategic Framework by providing for and maintaining infrastructure, creating opportunities for improved safety and health, facilitating public/private partnerships to solve problems and managing community resources to ensure sustainability of services.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

None

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Board could choose not to approve the attached memorandum of understanding with the Humboldt Trails Council. This action is not recommended because it would likely result in the discontinuation of a valuable community program and would reduce the level of maintenance on county-maintained trails.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Memorandum of Understanding between Humboldt Trails Council and County of Humboldt

File #: 20-102

2. Humboldt Bay Trail Fund Flier (Feb. 2020)
3. Humboldt Bay Trail Fund Guidance Document (Apr. 2017)
4. Map of Humboldt Bay Trail Projects

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No.: N/A

Meeting of: N/A

File No.: N/A