

HABITAT AUTHORITY

REOPEN GUIDELINES

Agenda Item #2, Board meeting May 8, 2020

Page 1

REOPENING TRAILS GUIDELINES

On Wednesday May 6, 2020, the County announced that they will be reopening their trails on Saturday, May 9. Since Habitat Authority trails are intertwined with the County's, this requires Habitat Authority response. For the public, differentiating which trails belong to which jurisdiction is not easily apparent. Once people are on the County trail that runs through the Habitat Authority's Preserve they could attempt to exit at Habitat Authority trailheads, and will be locked in if trailheads are closed and this could become a safety concern if visitors did not bring adequate water, etc. to return the way they came. Active ranger patrolling and not signage is most effective in controlling this.

If there is an overwhelming consensus by cities and other agencies to stay closed, if the County changes course, or if the Habitat Authority Board of Directors provide alternate direction the below plan may change.

Challenges are: ranger coverage, signage, bathroom facilities and current trail conditions. Also, social distancing will be difficult to achieve on many of the trails because they are narrow, but the public will have to be personally responsible for that when trails are open. Proposed is a soft re-open, monitor and document for success, and the Executive Director will take corrective action such as immediate reclosing if necessary.

If guidelines are not adhered to, or for any public safety reason, trails could be closed immediately by Executive Director.

Hellman – Keep closed. Los Angeles City set the precedent with keeping their busy Runyon Canyon closed, and Runyon Canyon's congestion and neighborhood parking issues are very similar to Hellman. Need to post signage at the top of Peppergrass to advise there is no exit at the trailhead. (This trailhead could reopen at the Executive Director discretion if in-part if street parking restrictions can be enforced, and if traffic and trailhead congestion can be effectively managed. If it opens, ranger monitoring of activity in the morning hours, and as available is necessary. Document activity with photos.)

Turnbull – Reopen Saturday. Have a ranger monitor activity 9am-12pm, and as available. Document activity with photos. (This will be the same ranger that would be monitoring Hellman if it were open)

Arroyo Pescadero – Reopen Saturday. Due to overgrowth, we will post signage encouraging one-way travel until trails can be mowed. We will try to mow it next week. Ranger or park staff will monitor and document use with photos when available.

HABITAT AUTHORITY

REOPEN GUIDELINES

Agenda Item #2, Board meeting May 8, 2020

Page 2

Sycamore Canyon – Keep closed until the trail can be mowed for safe passage. The target for this to occur is next week. Our Ecologist needs to conduct bird surveys for gnatcatchers prior to mowing. Post signage at trailhead gate indicating delayed opening. Need to post signage at the top of Rattlesnake Ridge to advise there is no exit at trailhead.

Hacienda Hills – Reopen Saturday. We will keep the trailhead closed for cars, using the existing A-frames and caution tape, to provide a visual cue to the public that things are not back to normal and encourage social distancing. Have a ranger or park staff monitor and document use 9 am – 12pm, and as available.

Powder Canyon- Reopen Saturday for pedestrian/bike access. Keep parking lot closed for cars to reduce congestion and crowding. Ranger will monitor and document use when available.

BATHROOMS – Clean bathrooms on Friday or Saturday, and reopen. The door handles can be sanitized every morning (at least) if not more.

MAINTENANCE – Trash cans will be emptied daily and lids sanitized daily. Litter at trailheads will be picked up daily.

PARKING LOTS - Will be reopened upon discretion of Executive Director.

TRAIL SIGNAGE – On Friday, signage will be posted at trail entrances that communicate expectations for users while on the trail. If guidelines are not adhered to, trails could be closed immediately. Attached is draft signage.

PUBLIC MESSAGING– Websites, social media posting and trail signage about hours and expected trail user behavior.

- a. Emphasize trail users' personal responsibility to comply with trail user requirements and recommendations.
- b. If trail users demonstrate a lack of compliance with social distancing and group gathering then the trails will be closed.
- c. If other COVID-19 related public safety concerns develop, future closures may be necessitated to protect public health and safety.
- d. Visitors are encouraged to follow “Leave No Trace” principles (carry in, carry out) including disposable gloves and masks.
- e. Do not visit public trails and trailheads if feeling sick and/or exhibiting any symptoms of illness.
- f. Follow all posted regulations at trails and trailhead facilities
- g. Physical distancing of 6 feet always required. No group gathering allowed on trails or in the parking lot.
- h. Limit visit to members of your household only.

HABITAT AUTHORITY

REOPEN GUIDELINES

Agenda Item #2, Board meeting May 8, 2020

Page 3

- i. Trail users over the age of 2 are required to wear face coverings at trailheads, parking lots and while on the trail.
- j. Consider avoiding popular locations that are prone to crowds.
- k. Alert trail users of your presence and step aside to let others pass.
- l. Bring water, hand sanitizer and/or disinfecting wipes to wash or sanitize hands frequently.
- m. Practice the leave-no-trace principles on the trails to protect park staff and wildlife.

VOLUNTEER HELP: Volunteers will be asked if they would like to help but only if they feel safe and practice the guidelines that we are posting. They could help reinforce the following public messages to trail users:

- a. Encourage trail users to help keep trails open by following physical distancing and not littering.
- b. Advise trail users to keep 6 feet of distance between themselves and others at all times.
- c. Ask people not to gather in large groups and encourage them to keep moving.
- d. Urge trail users to avoid areas where they cannot maintain a 6-foot distance – such as single track trails.
- e. Ask trail users to bring all of their trash out with them.
- f. Advise trail users that face coverings are required in parking area, trails and trailheads.

PHASE 2:

If trails need to be re-closed due to lack of social distancing or litter problems, then we close all trails on the weekend and move to enforcing closed trails with signage and active ranger patrol. This would involve posting signage at the top of Hacienda Hills to not exit at 7th Ave and to discourage exiting at Hellman and Sycamore as well (but this may not be effective). Other signage such as at the top of Schabarum Park as it borders Powder Canyon would be necessary as well.

PHASE 3:

If trails need to return to full closure everyday (as they have been for the past month) due to lack of social distancing or litter problems, then we can move to enforcing closed trails with signage and active ranger patrol. If group size restrictions of only socializing with households are lifted, we would also provide volunteer docent-led hikes only, several times a week dependent on volunteer availability. Having docent-led hikes of a limited size will allow for a more control over number of people that enter and what they do on the trails. Group sizes

HABITAT AUTHORITY

REOPEN GUIDELINES

Agenda Item #2, Board meeting May 8, 2020

Page 4

would be determined with public officer group size recommendations (expected to be low, such as 10)

WE WILL REFERENCE THE COUNTY REOPEN PLAN