Area Copy

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# TRAIL INVENTORY AND EVALUATION

# MOUNT DIABLO STATE PARK

Prepared by

the Mount Diablo Interpretive Association

September 1977

TABLE OF CONTENTS


Introduction..... 1

Overview of study area..... 2

Southern slopes ..... 2

Northern slopes ..... 2

Mount Diablo fire,August 1, 1977..... 4

Trail Inventory and Evaluation .....6

Southern Slopes .....6

Summit trail ..... 8

Fire road from Rock City to Wall Point ..... 8

Dan Cook Canyon--trail along creek ..... 8

Fossil Ridge west,with branches .....13

Fossil Ridge east .....14

Rock City Nature Trail .....14

Fire road from South Gate Road at Rock City to trail junction near Curry Point

Trail from Curry Point to Summit trail ..... 15

Trail from Curry Point to Camp Raymond C. Force..... 15

Fire road to Knob Cone Point ..... 16

Fire roads and trails in the vicinity of Black Hawk Ridge..... 18

Trail north from the forks of Sycamore Creek.....19

Fire road down Curry Canyon (Sloan Road) .....20

Chase Pond fire road .....21

Frog Pond fire road .....22

Chase Trail .....22

Trail to Barbeque Terrace to Summit trail .....24

Fire road from Junction Camp to Summit trail .....24

Trail from Summit trail to Green Ranch Road .....25

Fire breaks east of Green Ranch .....25

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Southern Slopes Cont.

Klee trail from near Devils Elbow to Green Ranch Road ..... 26

Deer Flat trail from Juniper Camp to Summit trail ..... 27

Juniper trail ..... 28

Northern Slopes ..... 30

Mitchell Canyon and Deer Flat fire roads ..... 32

Fire road through White Canyon (Red Road) ..... 32

Mitchel Rock trail ..... 33

Eagle Peak trail ..... 33

Prospectors Gap fire road ..... 35

Meridian Ridge and Cardinet Oaks Fire roads ..... 35

Back Creek trail and branches to Donner Canyon ..... 36

Donner Canyon fire road (Road to the Hetherington Ranch) ..... 37

Hetherington loop(Donner Creek trail) ..... 39

Lower Donner Trail ..... 40

Middle trail(trail to Big Springs) ..... 40

Falls trail(upper and lower falls trails) ..... 41

Bald Ridge trail ..... 42

North Peak trail ..... 43

Trail Corridors to Mount Diablo State Park ..... 45

Appendix A ..... 50

Appendix B map ..... 52

Additions & corrections ..... 53

# TRAIL ASSESSMENT

## MOUNT DIABLO STATE PARK

The purpose of this trail assessment is to give both the Department of Parks and Recreation and the public an accurate account of all the trails within Mount Diablo State Park. It does, however, go beyond this to provide recommendations to be used in developing a master plan for trails on the mountain and further provide descriptions of areas which need to be improved and maintained. We have also attempted to give an account of trails presently outside of the park boundary but which will soon be acquired. This has not been possible in all cases, and more will be added to this assessment at a future date. There is also an outline of the trails which will provide outside access and connect the state park with the local regional parks and open space areas. These trails are called corridors and will provide a wonderful system to be used by the public for access to and from both Mount Diablo and the East Bay Regional Parks.

Mount Diablo occupies a central position in Contra Costa County and rises high above the surrounding hills and valleys. It is only fitting that it should play an important role in the area's trail system. It is the connecting point of many county trails.

In an area of rapid growth our mountain has almost become surrounded by people and houses, and the demand for public open space and parks is high. With this comes a demand for access and use. The area has become famous for its open space and the county has the highest equestrian population of any in the country.

The increased demand for use and trails brings many problems. With a large population so close, it is necessary to develop a plan for both increased use and resource protection. Several unique situations occur on Mount Diablo. Being an island mountain, it is both botanically unique and a natural refuge for an abundant animal population. The mountain also has such steep slopes that erosion is a constant problem. In many places there are few alternatives for rerouting trouble spots on trails without damaging its unique flora, which should always be taken into consideration.

Although steepness and rugged terrain cause many problems for trails, they also create an esthetic experience which gives the impression that one is miles away from any urban area. This, in itself, may be the crowning glory of the "Devil's Mountain". So near, yet so far....

## Overview of Study Area

Mount Diablo is a plug of rocks, called the Franciscan Formation, squeezed up through thousands of feet of marine and fresh water sediment, formed over millions of years, and forming the interesting foothills surrounding the mountain. The high hills of the Morgan Territory area to the southeast are sedimentary rocks from the Cretaceous Great Valley sequence. The core, or plug, itself is divided in two by a narrow band of serpentine which is toxic to many plants, and so an interesting plant community occurs in this narrow belt on the north side of the mountain.

## Overview of the Southern Slopes

Mount Diablo's northern and southern slopes are divided by the Mount Diablo Base Line and Moses Rock Ridge. Moses Rock Ridge joins Long Ridge to the west. Along the southwestern side of Mount Diablo there is a succession of high sandstone ridges. The boundary of the park is on the southern end of Black Hawk Ridge. This ridge line continues northwest connecting Fossil Ridge, Wall Point, Pine Ridge, and Shell Ridge in a line. The area from Fossil and Black Hawk Ridges east is known as the Black Hills, and the south-facing ridges are covered with dark chaparral. The area just inside these two ridges is called the Inner Black Hills. This chaparral is dominated by chamise and black sage but the chaparral in the Inner Black Hills is different. Growing along the inner ridges of contorted sandstone are dense stands of manzanita. Of particular note are the two endemic manzanitas, along with a thick forest of knobcone pines at Knobcone Point. The lower north-facing hills are a gradation of northern oak woodland down to the canyon bottoms, which are riparian. Along these canyon bottoms grow native sycamores and alders, with coast live oaks and buckeyes higher up.

At the bottom of the main peak is Curry Canyon, into which the entire runoff of the south face drains down the steep canyons of Mountain Springs Creek, Alder Creek, and the larger Rhine Canyon. The old Green Ranch is situated on a plateau between Mountain Springs Creek and Alder Creek. There are three small ponds near the bottom of this south-facing slope -- Chase Pond, Hidden Pond, and Frog Pond. The creeks and canyons are covered with live oaks, but the main plant community is grassland with blue oaks and chaparral up higher. Digger pines are present throughout these southern slopes. Although the summit on its south-facing side is rocky and bare in many places, there are areas of chaparral, grassland, and a summit community of its own character.

## Overview of the Northern Slopes

The vegetation on the north side of Mount Diablo is quite distinct from that of its southern slopes. It is typified by a dense dwarf forest above with mixed live-oak woodland, then a blue-oak woodland and grassland below. There are several distinct

forest aggregations, one being a Coulter pine forest and another a big-berried manzanita forest. The high peaks also have the typical chaparral aggregation covering them.

The ridge which continues northwest from Pine Ridge (now in parklands) encloses a beautiful canyon with the western slopes of the summit. The North Gate Road bends and curves into Ygnacio Valley above the bottom of this canyon. Pine Ridge joins Shell Ridge (R-8 open space and regional park land). Protruding out of Pine Canyon is the rugged sandstone of Castle Rock (future Kerley acquisition). The western ridges of the summit, called Moses Rock Ridge and Long Ridge, are grassland with fingers of live- and blue-oak woodland and some chaparral, but the eastern-facing slopes of Pine Ridge are heavily wooded with many digger pines and oaks. North of Long Ridge, Olofson Ridge and Arroyo Del Cerro (out of the park) are covered with dark chaparral which is on serpentine soil and forms a distinct plant aggregation. Continuing north, the ridge enters the park and is bisected by White Canyon (Red Road), then continues along Black Point and Mount Zion. Mount Zion is out of the park. This high ridge is covered with dark chaparral and forms the western ridge line of Mitchell Canyon. Lime Ridge extends west of this high ridge. Some of it is now in open space and will hopefully connect to the state park. Mitchell Canyon is a deep, narrow gorge with a riparian belt running along its canyon bottom. There are large creek alders, oaks, and cottonwoods forming a beautiful canopy along the creek. The highest ridge line to the north is dominated by Eagle Peak, which forms the eastern wall of Mitchell Canyon. This ridge terminates at Twin Peaks with a lovely Coulter pine forest below, then a large open grassland which is still in the park. Below Eagle Peak to the east is a small narrow canyon called Back Canyon or the western fork of Donner Canyon. Back Canyon is separated from Donner Canyon by Meridian Ridge which intersects Bald Ridge. At the top of Bald Ridge is Ransom Point and then the summit.

Donner Canyon is a wide canyon dominated by Ransom Point and the steep rocky face of the North Peak. This is an incredibly interesting and wild area which had been free of fire for almost 100 years. Because Donner Creek takes the entire runoff of the northern slopes of North Peak and Bald Ridge, it has a strong winter flow. This also causes much of the canyon to be covered in woodland and brushland. At the top of the canyon, the creek forks east and west. The eastern fork, Wild Oat Canyon, has some beautiful waterfalls. There is a belt of big-berried manzanitas that is on serpentine soil and cuts across the upper canyon area and over Murchio Gap to Mitchell Canyon. This belt also contains other interesting plants. Centered in the canyon bottom is the Hetherington ranch with a small open grassland surrounded by a blue-oak forest. Part of the canyon is not in the park and includes a section of wooded creek. The eastern ridge of Donner Canyon is a hilly area of blue oaks and grassland but also includes two low ridges of manzanita forest and digger pines not in the park.

All of North Peak is steep and rocky but has many areas with large digger pines, contorted junipers, and large old oaks. There are two areas on North Peak now in the park. North Peak, itself, will soon be acquired, opening up even more land for exploration and enjoyment. These two pieces of parkland, which are separated from the present boundary, are on the eastern side of North Peak. At the corner of Marsh Creek Road and Morgan Territory Road is an absolutely beautiful piece of property donated by the Save Mount Diablo organization. It includes a small canyon, wooded hills, and little creeks, just below the rugged rock outcrops of North Peak. This property is connected to the Perkins Canyon parcel by a 40-foot strip next to Morgan Territory Road. Between the two state park properties is the old Mount Diablo Mercury Mine. With the Save Mount Diablo donation, the state bought the lower part of Perkins Canyon, connecting it to an acquisition at the top of Perkins Canyon. Perkins Canyon is a rocky canyon with large digger pines and oaks mixed with riparian and grassland vegetation.

(Bob Doyle, July 1977)

Mount Diablo Fire, August 1, 1977

At 6:30 on Monday night a bolt of lightning struck the western side of Twin Peaks causing a blaze which burned for three days and nights, making it the most spectacular fire witnessed by local residents since the 1930's.

The fire burned slowly at first, working its way down into the Coulter pine forest at the bottom of Twin Peaks. The fire then spread southeast and caught the heavy brush of Back Canyon. Within minutes strong updrafts blew the fire to a tremendous size, and it roared up Back Canyon, climbing Eagle Peak in leaps and bounds, then spreading across to Meridian Ridge and into Donner Canyon. The fire was intensified by the Coulter pines which were full of dead foliage from bark beetle infestation. Aided by the long lack of fire in both Donner and Back Canyons, the fire intensified and spread, burning everything in its path up Back Canyon to Bald Ridge. As the fire ran out of control across Donner Canyon, it caught afire an old stand of tree-size manzanitas, almost eliminating them from that area. Fingers began to spread east and west, and shot high flames out of Wild Oat Canyon and up to North Peak. By Tuesday morning, the fire had spread around the east side of North Peak and west over Murchio Gap and was slowly moving into Mitchell Canyon, which had burned in 1931. From Donner Canyon the fire moved through the saddle between the peaks and south over Prospectors Gap, meeting the fire which continued east around North Peak to Perkins Canyon.

By Wednesday the fire was almost out in Donner Canyon, but was still burning down as far as White Canyon and over Olofson Ridge to Arroyo del Cerro. To the south, the area below the summit as far as Green Ranch was burned. By thursday night the fire was over.

Since the Donner Canyon and Back Canyon area had not burned for as long as a hundred years, it was most affected by the fire. Back Canyon and Bald Ridge were denuded of vegetation. The lower areas of oak woodland were not as much affected as the chaparral and manzanita areas. Under the ashes of the fire are countless seeds, waiting to be liberated by winter rains.

Most agree that the greatest damage done was by the many bulldozers on the mountain. It is also a time to take into account the damage done to the trails. Many of the trails on the north side will become creeks this winter because of a lack of watershed protection on steep terrain. Trails which were built to avoid heavy brush and trees can now be reconstructed along more logical routes which can be maintained and used for many years to come.

(Bob Doyle, August 1977)

## TRAIL INVENTORY AND EVALUATION

The trail assessments cover all of Mount Diablo State Park except the pending Friedan and Rossi, and Kerley, acquisitions, and include additional lands on the east side of North Peak. Assessments were made in the field, starting in the summer of 1976, by volunteers from the Mount Diablo Interpretive Association and other cooperating hikers' and horsemen's associations. A letter was given to each volunteer describing the nature of the information to be collected on each trail. This letter is reproduced as Appendix A. Each volunteer wrote an assessment of the trail he walked or rode, with comments and recommendations. The recommendations are the opinions of those who wrote them, and some statements may not reflect the policy of the MDIA Trails Committee. The name of the volunteer and the date on which the assessment was made is given at the bottom of each.

Mount Diablo State Park divides neatly into northern and southern areas, the boundary running along Moses Rock Ridge and over the summit. The trails are described separately for each. The attached trails map should be referred to when reading the assessments. Flags were placed along some of the trails, each bearing a unique letter-number combination. These are referred to in the assessments and are located on the map.

### Southern Slopes

Summit Trail
Fire Road From Rock City to Wall Point
Dan Cook Canyon--Trail Alongside Creek
Fossil Ridge West, With Branches
Fossil Ridge East
Rock City Nature Trail
Fire Road From South Gate Road at Rock City to Trail Junction Near Curry Point
Trail From Curry Point to Summit Trail

Trail From Curry Point to Camp Raymond C. Force
Fire Road to Knob Point
Fire Roads and Trails in the Vicinity of Black Hawk Ridge
Trail North From the Forks of Sycamore Creek
Fire Road Down Curry Canyon (Sloan Road)
Chase Pond Fire Road
Frog Pond Fire Road
Chase Trail
Trail From Barbecue Terrace to Summit Trail
Fire Road From Junction Camp to Summit Trail
Trail From Summit Trail to Green Ranch Road
Fire Breaks East of Green Ranch
Klee Trail From Near Devils Elbow to Green Ranch Road
Deer Flat Trail From Juniper Camp to Summit Trail
Juniper Trail

SUMMIT TRAIL

a. Dan Cook Canyon

The trail begins at the state park gate on South Gate Road. Parking has almost been eliminated by the construction of fences and the dumping of soil along the edge of the road. There is now only room for two or three cars at the trailhead.

The trail begins on a gentle grade in a 15 to 20 foot fenced right-of-way. The tread is three to four feet wide. Some buckeyes need slight pruning. There is a steep section in the second gully the trail crosses, reaching a 30 percent grade. The trail is beginning to develop a rut. Shortly beyond, climbing out of the gully, the trail is steep again. A bypass for this entire section is possible in land to the east owned by the Blackhawk Development Company. More steep, rutted grades lie ahead. Water bars are needed. Across the creek, in Smiley and Curtola's property, is an abandoned pipeline. The trail crosses the creek on a good eight foot wide bridge, climbs on a 25 percent grade, and joins a fire road. Just beyond, a spur trail branches north. It appears little used, is somewhat overgrown, built on a moderate grade, and dead ends at a chaparral-covered slope. Like the main trail up to this point, it is fenced on both sides.

The trail continues as a moderately-graded fire road, about ten feet wide, no longer fenced. Where the road crosses the creek, a foot path branches off along the north side of the stream. The road makes a switchback. A large gully is eroding the upper part of the road and dumping debris on the road below. A second gully closer to the vertex of the switchback is badly damaging the upper part of the road. A trail shortcut crosses the very end of the switchback. Here is a small remnant of a barbed wire fence. The road continues to Live Oak Camp, largely on exposed sandstone bedrock.

Dan Cook Canyon is appropriate as a high-volume riding and hiking trail. Erosion problems should be corrected, and minor sections rerouted when land becomes available, but there is no reason to close the trail in the meantime. The parking shortage

at the bottom must be corrected. Acquisition of a small area of land will probably be necessary. A cleared lot to the west of the trailhead would be perfect for this purpose. The old pipeline, which extends from Smiley and Curtola's property up the canyon, should be removed.

Chris Valle-Riestra
March 22, 1977

b. Rock City Bypass

This is horse trail, about two feet wide in most places. It veers off the fire road up Dan Cook Canyon about 50 feet before its end, and passes through part of Live Oak Camp. It soon joins a short section of old road to an old incinerator. This, and much assorted junk and litter in the surrounding area, should be removed. The trail continues up a small canyon. It is mostly in good shape, but there are some steep spots. The trail obviously floods in spots, and includes some bad longitudinal ruts. Rip-rapping may be needed. Some minor reroutings are needed.

Chris Valle-Riestra
March 22, 1977

c. Wall Point Fire Road to Lateral to Barbecue Terrace

Grade: 25% grade up to ridge and junction with trail to Curry Point. Level and then moderate down grade to road junction.

Width: Two feet up the ridge and for some distance beyond. A double track has formed as the trail approaches the road junction.

Clearance: This trail runs through grassland and has good clearance through its length.

Drainage: The trail up the ridge is very badly rutted and needs many water bars. The remainder of the trail has no serious erosion problems.

Notes: There is an old stone staircase leading up to the

Summit Trail from the road as shown on the map. An old branch of the trail down a ridge toward Rock City is deceiving (L-2).

Recommendations: This route is adequate as a major riding and hiking route. The very steep section up to the ridge may need slight rerouting.

Chris Valle-Riestra
Mary Bowerman
Gen Sattler
August 15, 1976

d. From lateral to Barbecue Terrace to Green Ranch Road

This is an old fire road. Clearance and width are good. Grades are not excessive, except that there are several steep spots with potential erosion problems as the trail initially climbs away from the road. Below Sunset Picnic Area, the drainage ditches need repair. The same problem exists on the spur to Junction Camp. The initial few feet of the Deer Flat Trail branching to the left need reinforcement. Signs are needed at all intersections. This road should be allowed to revert to a horse trail, as it has little use for fire control purposes.

Nancy Menken
Ruben Balzer
April 28, 1977

e. Green Ranch Road to Summit

Description and Alignment: This trail starts close to junction of Summit Highway and Pioneer Camp Road. Trailhead is marked with post and arrow. The trail consists of three principal sections. The first is a foot path which climbs through open chaparral above Pioneer Camp. It joins the second section, a fire road rising from Pioneer Camp, which skirts the rock base of the Summit Highway along much of its length and ends at the sharp highway bend known as Devil's Elbow. The third section is a wide trail rising steeply from Devil's Elbow through dense chaparral to the summit, ending at the entrance to the lower summit parking lot. The fire road section is not marked as a road on topographic maps.

Grade: First part (foot path) rises steadily; short sections exceed 30% but are not objectionable. The fire road grades are generally reasonable (15% maximum). The last part up to the summit is very steep in parts (up to 25%), but rerouting is impractical and erosion is not excessive.

Width and Clearance: Initial foot path has 2-ft. clearance; some light maintenance is needed -- brush trimming, minor improvements in cut of trail. The

fire road is partly buried by talus from highway construction in a couple of locations; minor stabilization (by rock removal) and better definition of path needed. A few intruding trees need trimming for horsemen. The final leg to the summit is satisfactory.

Drainage and General Features: At the trailhead (beginning of first leg), cover brush is needed to obliterate a shortcut beyond the trailhead marker. Minor work is needed on first leg to improve drainage at switchbacks, to remove loose gravel on very steep portions, and to obliterate (with brush) a few confusing deer trails. Heavier construction work is needed on the second section (abandoned fire road), including a few water bars to avoid incipient gullying, and filling of some badly eroded sections (perhaps with rock from nearby talus slopes). No drainage problems on last leg.

Laterals and Marking: Clear trail marking is badly needed -- visible from both directions. A small lateral foot path leads from the first leg to Pioneer Camp; this is a good trail giving campers delightful access to a grove of pines, and should be kept, but it is unmarked. Clear markers should be installed at the junction of the first section with the abandoned fire road, one part of which does go down to Pioneer Camp but is not part of the Summit Trail. About 300 yards below Devil's Elbow the trail climbs up to the highway and then back down; some indication of trail location is needed here and at Indian Ceremonial Spring beyond. At Devil's Elbow the situation is complete chaos. The trail again climbs to the highway shoulder, and an existing marker directs the hiker in the wrong direction -- instead of pointing to the final trail section, the marker arrow directs the hiker to the abandoned North Peak Trail. As a result, many visitors wind up climbing the rock flanks of the peak toward the summit observation tower, as evidenced by heavy damage to the chaparral. Signs at the end of the trail (lower parking lot) have been vandalized.

Notes: Many yellow flags dot the side of the first trail section -- these are not part of this survey and should be removed (our yellow flags are always marked with a number and a letter).

Recommendations: The trail is one of the most important ones on the mountain; it is in reasonably good shape and requires only minor repairs as previously outlined, as well as proper markers. In addition, gates or other barriers are needed at points where the trail climbs to the highway to stop incursion by motorcycles. Eventually the two places where trail and highway meet should be modified (second order of priority). New trail sections could be readily built along contour lines below these junctions; in this way the disturbing exposure of hikers to highway traffic would be eliminated.

The end of the trail at the lower parking lot is still some distance below the observation tower, and most hikers desire to walk up to the summit. Presently, this must be done on the entirely too narrow and inadequate shoulder of the one-way highway to the upper parking lot. A trail just below the highway is badly needed.

Edith and Frank Valle-Riestra

September 5, 1976

FIRE ROAD FROM ROCK CITY TO WALL POINT

Grade: Road starts out flat. Slight down grade later on, increasing to 20% at one point.

Width and clearance: Wide fire road.

Drainage: Good.

Notes: Private property sign on road is located about one half mile before park boundary. The State Game Refuge sign on the gate at the same point is facing the wrong direction. The trail down the ridge from Wall Point to Dan Cook Canyon is overgrown and extremely steep. The trail heading southwest from Wall Point is a cow path, sometimes quite steep.

Chris Valle-Riestra
August 15, 1976

DAN COOK CANYON--TRAIL ALONGSIDE CREEK

A foot path branches off the main Summit Trail as it crosses the creek before making a large switchback. It follows the north bank of the creek. At first it follows an old road, which was probably built to service the mine shown on the topographic map. I was not able to find this mine. The trail continues on a gentle grade, staying close to the north side of the creek. It is generally a quite pleasant foot path, 18 to 24 inches wide. There are a few short steep spots, and a small bridge is needed after one quarter mile. Some poison oak needs trimming. After another one quarter mile, there is a short foot bridge which needs replacing. The trail becomes progressively rougher, but always passable. There are some old tires and steel drums in the creek approaching Live Oak Camp. The trail divides and becomes indefinite. The best route joins the Summit Trail on a small ridge near the incinerator.

This would be a good alternate route for hikers ascending Dan Cook Canyon, but should probably be closed to horses as too much upgrading would be needed. It passes through a streamside botanic community quite different from that seen on the main trail. It could be opened with only minor work.

Chris Valle-Riestra
March 22, 1977

FOSSIL RIDGE WEST, WITH BRANCHES

The main route is a fire road, gently graded except for a steep climb at the very end. It passes through an extensive area of bunch grass. A new trail might be built to Artist Point and east Fossil Ridge. From the westernmost peak of Fossil Ridge, a very steep and rough trail descends the main hogback to Dan Cook Canyon.

A branch near the start, a narrow but good horse trail, descends to Live Oak Camp. The grade is gentle, and some pruning is needed.

A branch descends the grassy vale near the end of the main

route to Dan Cook Canyon. This is a quite steep, open horse trail. The average grade is 25 to 30 percent, with a maximum of 40 percent. Water bars are needed, but the surface is still good. Some pruning is needed. There is room for switchbacks to be built where needed. This trail should be upgraded, as it would offer a short attractive loop trip from Rock City with the Summit Trail and Fossil Ridge.

Chris Valle-Riestra
March 22, 1977

FOSSIL RIDGE EAST

The first half of this route is an old paved road, now deteriorating. At the end of the pavement stand old posts for a chain. The rest of the route is a flat graded road. I recommend that this road be allowed to revert to a trail, as there seems to be little need to maintain it for fire control purposes.

Chris Valle-Riestra
March 22, 1977

ROCK CITY NATURE TRAIL

This old trail starts at the junction of the Summit Trail and the fire road to Wall Point. It is level, but deeply rutted and overgrown. The spur to Sentinel Rock is indefinite, as is the end of the main branch. The extension down to Live Oak Camp is even more indefinite. It is likely some trail will be needed in this area, but I can offer no recommendation on the basis of this survey.

Chris Valle-Riestra
March 22, 1977

FIRE ROAD FROM SOUTH GATE ROAD AT ROCK CITY TO TRAIL JUNCTION NEAR CURRY POINT

Moderate grade, good condition. A "Service Road" sign on

the driveway to a ranger residence blocks entrance to the trail from the picnic area on South Gate Road. This sign could be placed slightly closer to the house.

Chris Valle-Riestra
August 15, 1976

TRAIL FROM CURRY POINT TO SUMMIT TRAIL

Grade: Slight at start. 22% on hill after junction with first trail from Rock City.

Width: 2 feet at start. 7 feet after junction with first trail from Rock City. Approaching Summit Trail, trail narrows to 2-3 feet.

Clearance: Trail runs through grassland and has wide clearance. There are some low branches approaching Summit Trail.

Drainage: Ditching next to trail near start. The trail is developing ruts on the hill after the junction with the first trail from Rock City, with multiple trails. Poorly drained low spot approaching Summit Trail (L-1).

Notes: Sight distance down the road at the start is insufficient. Gravel pile at junction with first trail from Rock City. Old trail sign shortly before flag L-1.

Recommendations: Trail is adequate in most respects. The steep section after the branch from Rock City could be rerouted around the hill to the south, removing it farther from the park road.

Chris Valle-Riestra
August 15, 1976

TRAIL FROM CURRY POINT TO CAMP RAYMOND C. FORCE

This short trail is two feet wide and has a maximum grade of 34%. It runs through open grassland, and thus has good clearance. No significant erosion problems are apparent.

Chris and Frank Valle-Riestra
August 15, 1976

FIRE ROAD TO KNOB POINT

Begins at Curry Point parking area. About 100 yards east, the trail to Curry Canyon branches to the left. Trail sign needed at junction.

One steep (10%) grade near beginning of trail, then it follows ridge top and general contour. Good views to east and south. Many large oaks in this section. Trail surface is soft in this part, probably muddy in winter.

There are two fences in first ½ mile, with locked gates across trail. Stiles are needed here.

Following second gate, trail goes through oak woodland. There is a fairly steep grade (15%) for about ¼ mile. Surface here is fairly hard and drainage here appears ok.

Trail takes fork to left. Trail sign needed here. Some uphill grade at 12% through chaparral composed mainly of manzanita. Excellent views of summit here.

Long gradual uphill for next ½ mile to junction of scenic loop. This is an ungraded road through the grass, about 1/6th mile in length, suitable for hiking or riding. Scenic views at the loop and the many large oaks make this an inviting place for a rest or lunch stop.

On the west side of the loop is a short spur that leads to a narrow (1 ft.) foot or animal trail going out to a grassy knoll overlooking Curry Canyon. We should probably investigate the feasibility or desirabliity of a trail link here with the Curry Canyon trail.

Main trail continues steeply uphill (12-15%) to top of ridge with sweeping views of summit, North Peak and the Delta. Trail terminates at park boundary fence and gate. Trail and park boundary signs needed here.

Backtracking about ¼ mile there is a side road leading steeply downhill. Grade 15-20% for most of its length, ¼ mile, ending at tower of power line. Steepness of grade and loose surface make this spur subject to erosion during winter rains. This area has scenic views of San Ramon Valley, interestingly eroded sandstone rock formations, and an extensive grove of knobcone pines.

Criteria:

Alignment: Follows logical route, mainly along ridge lines.

Grades: Grades mostly less than 15% except on spur road to power line. Steep sections are not very long in length; most uphill sections seem gradual and are easily hikable.

Width: Eight to 10 feet. This trail is really a jeep road and is graded and well maintained for the use of motor vehicles.

Clearance: No problems, with possible exception of section between first and second gates where large oaks may extend branches too far for horseback riders along sides of road. Fallen branches on road may be a hazard after winter storms.

Drainage and erosion: There is no evidence of erosion at this time. Road had been graded since the last rains, so there are no gullies. Much of the road has a sandstone base but in places the soil is loose and after rains will probably be muddy. The steeper sections of the road will probably have gullies form in the winter, but if the road is maintained often, they will be graded.

Structures: Two stiles are needed at the gates. These can be very simple, such as 2 horizontal wood pieces, nailed to uprights along the fence next to the gate. This is much easier and safer than climbing up on the barbed wire.

Over-all assessment: A good trail for a short hike and not too strenuous. About 3 miles round trip. Suitable for riding and hiking. Very scenic, sweeping views with little sign of development (except for power line). Trail traverses a variety of plant communities; grassland, savannah, chaparral, pine and oak woodlands; would be splendid for nature trail. We recommend this trail be included in trail system.

Joy Meagher
Al Kutchins
August 15, 1976

Addendum: Spur from Knob Point to Curry Canyon: A spur road takes off northwest from the saddle of Knob Point Fire Road to a small knoll of live oaks, with excellent views of the delta, summit and North Peak of Mount Diablo, and hills to the west. A fire road goes downhill to the west of the knoll along a broad ridge. This road is really only the tracks made by trucks during a fire some years ago, and is now nearly overgrown with grass, and finally disappears altogether as the ridge narrows and plunges downhill toward the canyon. There is no route to the canyon below, which can be reached only by manoeuvering down the steep grassy slopes. At the bottom, there is a cow path about 12 inches wide along the creek. Following

this path west, the main fire road in Curry Canyon is reached after about ¼ mile.

The trail width and alignment is adequate for a foot trail as far as the narrow part of the ridge. A switchback trail would have to be constructed for the last few hundred feet to make a good connecting trail between Knob Point and Curry Canyon.

Joy Meagher
April 12, 1977

FIRE ROADS AND TRAILS IN THE VICINITY OF BLACK HAWK RIDGE

Fire road from road to Knob Point to East Fork Sycamore Creek: Base is adobe soil, sticky when wet. First portion is on a 4% slope, increasing to 15%, then 22% just before the first road junction. At flag B-1 there is a collapsed culvert which is causing erosion downhill, forming a gully cutting into the road.

Fire road down Sycamore Creek: 19% grade at park boundary.

Fire road up East Fork Sycamore Creek: Grades are over 20%. 100 feet beyond the intersection at the start there is gully erosion beside the road. Near the upper end of this segment there is a small cabin in a meadow. The five-way intersection at the end is marked by flag B-2, tied to a live oak.

Trail north from flag B-2: Start is blocked by a dead downed oak. There is another fallen tree 200 feet beyond. The trail consists of old tire tracks. At flag B-3 there is restricted overhead clearance (6 feet) and overhanging poison oak vines on the uphill side. There is another fallen tree near the end of the trail, under the high voltage power lines.

Fire road to Oyster Point: At flag B-4 there are overhanging oak branches. Shortly beyond, two thirds of the road is washed out by a 7 foot wide gully.

Loop trail on Black Hawk Ridge: Proceeding clockwise, there are overhanging branches at flag B-5. This former jeep trail has worn down to a wide foot trail. At flag B-6 there

is an overhanging buckeye and potential gully erosion. Soil is washing down on the trail from uphill bank erosion. The grade of the first part of the trail is about 10%, increasing to 28% just beyond flag B-6. The trail surface becomes very irregular, caused by cattle trampling the soil when wet. The rest of the trail is on about a 12% grade and is beginning to erode away at the outer edge, while soil from above is being deposited on the inward side. From the junction at the high voltage line tower, the rest of the loop, including the spur south to the park boundary, consists of wide fire roads, all built at reasonable grades.

Steve Michaels
Phil Gordon
August 15, 1976

Addendum: An old fire road ascends the Northeast Fork Sycamore Creek from the horse trough at the ford at its confluence with the East Fork. It soon narrows to a foot path and branches. The northernmost branch becomes narrow and steep, and finally connects to the fire road from Curry Point. This trail is an unnecessary short cut and should be eliminated.

Another foot path descends the south bank of the East Fork Sycamore Creek. It soon degenerates into animal tracks.

Joy Meagher
April 12, 1977

TRAIL NORTH FROM THE FORKS OF SYCAMORE CREEK

From the junction of the East and West Forks of Sycamore Creek, a trail branches north from the fire road and runs along the east bank of the West Fork. It ascends a fork to the right after one quarter mile, and another fork to the right after another one quarter mile in this canyon. It swings north, and emerges on the fire road to Knob Point. The trail is 6 to 12 inches wide, with and uneven surface. The creek is crossed twice, so there will be muddy spots in the rainy season. Grades

reach 30 percent. There is a mineral spring alongside the trail. The trail would make a good loop from Sycamore Creek, but should be widened in places, graded, better creek crossings built, and the upper portion through grassland better defined.

Joy Meagher
April 12, 1977

FIRE ROAD DOWN CURRY CANYON (SLOAN ROAD)

Sloan Road is a maintained fire road, generally at least 10 feet wide, and with adequate clearance. Grades are never uncomfortably steep.

Starting from Curry Point, the road is level. After the gate and junction with the fire road to Knob Point, the first down grade is 20%. About ¼ mile from Curry Point, there is a poorly constructed drain that is a potential erosion hazard. On the next curve, there is a 23% grade. The old stone trash boxes for the culverts along this section of road are now several feet above the road, silted in, and no longer functional. The culverts themselves are in poor condition, and one has had a hole torn in it from above by a road grader. There is a sustained 25% grade down to a corral and the junction of the Chase Trail. From this point there is an excellent view of the summit.

Passing through a gate in a fenceline, there is an old almond orchard on the left. Shortly beyond, a small creek crosses the road from the right. This is a beautiful stream, but the culvert for the road is poorly built. It needs cleaning out and proper rock retaining walls. The grade beyond this point is between 18 and 20%. Curry Creek becomes visible for the first time. It is very pretty, but has been used by cattle as a water hole.

The road crosses another side stream at flag H-3. Again, the cattle have damaged this creek. A good cow path follows the east side of the creek up to a meadow and a large bay tree, whence there is a good view up Curry Canyon. Opposite flag H-3, there is a nice pool in Curry Creek, surrounded by boulders. Shortly beyond, a culvert empties onto an unprotected bank, a

situation which may cause gully erosion. The upper end of the culvert needs cleaning out.

At the junction with the fire road to Chase Pond, there is a large maple. An old metal sign is unreadable. From here there is a fine view of the summit. All of the culverts along this section of road are in poor condition. Sights in this area include madrone and bay trees, mossy boulders and rock outcrops, fungi, and a ridge to the left of the canyon covered with small oaks. The grade of the road is gentle. Dirt from road repair has been pushed into the creek. The canyon is quite deep.

At flag H-1, Mountain Springs Creek flows into Curry Creek from the left. This adds greatly to the flow of Curry Creek, being larger than the main stream itself. A cow path leads down to the confluence, and continues up Mountain Springs Creek. There is an attractive pool among the rocks of the creek, and there may be a waterfall in spring. The trees are oaks, digger pines, maples, and bays. The view is across rolling, oak covered hills to the summit. There are some old pipes which should be removed, and the cow path to the creek might erode.

Alder Creek joins Curry Canyon at flag H-2. This is another nice spot, with permanent water, tall maples, and a view of the summit. The canyon narrows and so does the road. It is 40 feet above the creek, cracking, and beginning to wash out. Shortly beyond, the road reaches a gate, and the boundary of the Mann property.

Barbara Smith
Vicki House
August 15, 1976

CHASE POND FIRE ROAD

The grade of this road in some spots exceeds 15%. It increases to 22% shortly before meeting the lateral to Frog Pond, and 25% just after this junction. This is not great enough to cause erosion problems or discomfort to the trail user. The road is wide and well maintained, and has wide clearance in all places. The surface as far as the junction with

the road to Frog Pond is gravel surfaced, and should remain firm in winter. The surface beyond this point is adobe, and will probably be muddy in winter.

The trail passes attractive rock formations and laurels climbing out of Curry Canyon. As the trail rises, excellent views of the peak and surrounding ridges develop. The route is direct, and no new trails in this area seem necessary. Chase Pond has been badly damaged by cattle. An old fire break leads up the hill behind Chase Pond.

Frank Valle-Riestra
Edith Valle-Riestra
August 15, 1976

FROG POND FIRE ROAD

This road branches off the road to Chase Pond and immediately passes a spring and small pond. The road is wide, nearly level, and has good clearance. It leads beyond Frog Pond to another small pond.

Al Kutchins
George Nichols
August 15, 1976

CHASE TRAIL

a. Chase Pond to Curry Canyon Road (Sloan Road)

Alignment: The first portion of the trail consists mostly of cowpaths, and the route is not always clear. The trail branches off the Chase Pond fire road at flag C-2 and heads down the canyon of Chase Creek. At flag C-3, tied to a large oak, the route rises to the left out of the canyon, following an old pipeline. Starting at flag C-4, the trail contours to the left around the hill. At flag C-5 it runs down a gully to meet an old fire road which continues to the right. Following this to the left, the route crosses Curry Creek at flag C-6 and soon joins the Curry Canyon fire road.

Grade: The trail runs steeply down Chase Creek, then

becomes more gentle. Past a group of rocks beyond flag C-3, it once again becomes steep. The route down the gully is very steep, and should be replaced. The fire road portion is quite gentle of grade.

Width: The trail is of only cowpath width where there is a clear route. The fire road portion is about 8 feet wide.

Clearance: The trail runs mostly through grassland, and has good clearance.

Drainage: The soil of the canyon of Chase Creek is loose and a new trail tread through here would probably need reinforcement. Some soft rock outcrops could be easily cut through to provide a more stable trail surface. The soil of the old road is adobe, and will probably become quite muddy in wet weather.

Notes: There is a jumble of old sheet metal and pipes above Mountain Springs Creek near the start of the north portion of the Chase Trail. A partially buried pipe runs out of Mountain Springs and along the first part of the trail described. It disappears somewhere above Curry Canyon. Some parts are exposed, such as trestles over gullies, and are unsightly. Along the old fire road, a fence starts next to the road about half way to the junction with the Curry Canyon road, and runs next to it for the remainder of the distance.

Recommendations: This is a good route for a trail, providing access to Chase Pond. The trail is quite faint, and needs to be completely rebuilt. With minor variations, the present location is good. An attractive new trail could be built from Chase Pond, running back into Mountain Springs Creek, out by Hidden Pond, and ending at the Frog Pond fire road. Cattle have badly damaged both Chase Pond and Mountain Springs Creek. Their removal would make the area much more attractive to the hiker.

Edith Valle-Riestra
Frank Valle-Riestra
August 15, 1976

b. Chase Pond to Green Ranch Road

This section of the Chase Trail is a very faint route, marked by occasional flags, generally running up gullies or ridgetops. It is often difficult to follow, and is not really a definite path. Its start near Chase Pond is marked by flag C-1. It crosses Mountain Springs Creek at flag A-3, and heads straight up the hill to the east at a 100% grade. Flag A-4 is high on this bank. The route continues through a gully (A-5) and onto a ridge (A-6), and eventually ends at the fire road just west of Green Ranch. A trail in this area might be interesting, but there is nothing to recommend the present flagged route over any other.

George Nichols
Al Kutchins
August 15, 1976

TRAIL FROM BARBECUE TERRACE TO SUMMIT TRAIL

The trail follows the fence line on a 15% down grade. This increases to 40% for 10 feet into the small gully. The soil is loose and broken by horse hooves. There is a culvert under the trail at the gully. The up grade (30 feet long) on the other side of the gully approaches 100%. From here there are no major problems to the road and the Summit Trail.

Mary Bowerman
Gen Sattler
August 15, 1976

FIRE ROAD FROM JUNCTION CAMP TO SUMMIT TRAIL

A short fire road starts across the road from Junction Camp and connects to the Summit Trail. There are no problems with this route. There appears to be little reason to continue maintaining it as a fire road.

Chris Valle-Riestra
July 2, 1977

TRAIL FROM SUMMIT TRAIL TO GREEN RANCH ROAD

Trail leaves Summit Trail opposite Blue Oak Picnic Area and climbs to the road on a 29% grade. The route passes through Blue Oak Picnic Area. Here a trail branches to the north, leading to the Pioneer Camp road junction. It is 18 inches wide, built on a slight grade, and passes through low brush where lateral clearance is bad. The main trail descends to and crosses a gully at flag G-2. This crossing is excessively steep. The remainder of the trail is in excellent condition. It is 2 feet wide, nearly level, and generally well cleared. There are a few fallen logs across the trail. It ends at the bottom of the last switchback of the fire road to Green Ranch, at a sign that reads: END OF TRAIL RETURN TO PARK, with an arrow pointing to the left. An old fire trail crosses the trail on the last major ridge before the end. It continues indefinitely downhill, while the uphill branch ends at the fire road to Green Ranch, at flag G-1. This fire trail reaches grades of up to 34%, and passes through open woods.

Chris Valle-Riestra
September 5, 1976

FIRE BREAKS EAST OF GREEN RANCH

There are a number of old fire breaks in this area, none of which include maintained roads or trails. The start of the break at Green Ranch is marked by flag A-1, 200 feet down the hill ESE of the main house. It crosses Alder Creek and starts upslope for a short distance by flag A-2, on a blazed pine, 300 feet downhill from the knoll near which the fire break now climbs. From here one fork heads gently downhill to the south, then becomes very steep, and joins the fire road to Frog Pond.

Al Kutchins
George Nichols
August 15, 1976

KLEE TRAIL FROM NEAR DEVILS ELBOW TO GREEN RANCH ROAD

The Klee Trail branches off the new (lower) North Peak Trail a little below Devils Elbow and circles the hill heading southwest. The trail is about 12 inches wide, rough and faint, built at a moderate grade, and has good clearance. There is no clear route down to the lower installations at Indian Ceremonial Spring. From here there is a lateral horse trail to the upper spring. The Klee Trail continues down along an old fire road and buried pipeline. There is a 38% down grade leading down to springs at the head of Mountain Springs Creek. There are many old pipes lying around these springs. An attractive route that would avoid this steep grade and unsightly piped spring could run down the oak-studded hill to the south. The power lines upslope mar the view of the summit in this area.

The trail now narrows to 12 inches and assumes its original character. It passes by attractive rock outcrops in Mountain Springs Creek. There are parts that are quite steep, but the clearance is good. For a while the trail becomes hard to follow, then rejoins the nearly obliterated fire road, to follow it all the way to the Green Ranch fire road. The grade increases at one point to 34%. The soil is gravelly here, and it is easy to slip. One stretch of trail is overgrown. It then passes by another piped spring, where the trail passes by the outflow. This disturbs a source of water for wildlife, and should be corrected. The now wide path follows an underground pipe and a line of surge pipes, and ends at the fire road to Green Ranch.

Recommendations: After walking the Klee Trail and the Summit Trail, I have come to the opinion that only one riding and hiking trail is needed in this area. Neither trail presently serves this purpose satisfactorily. The Summit Trail is in sight or sound of the road for about the upper half of this segment, while the Klee Trail passes too close to several piped springs and ends too far distant from Pioneer Camp. I suggest a combined route starting up the Summit Trail and then dropping to the Klee Trail in the head of Mountain Springs

Creek, then following the approximate route of the Klee Trail to Devils Elbow.

Chris Valle-Riestra
September 5, 1976

DEER FLAT TRAIL, JUNIPER CAMP TO JUNCTION WITH SUMMIT TRAIL NEAR PIONEER CAMP

Alignment. The main trail from Juniper Camp to Deer Flat is a fire road which starts at the far end of the Juniper Camp loop and continues below Moses Rock Ridge (covered by a separate report). About 100 yards beyond the start of the fire road, a small footpath, marked with a plain post, veers downhill and then heads back up toward the western extreme of the Juniper Camp loop road. This, in fact, is the continuation of the Deer Flat Trail which eventually ends near Pioneer Camp. The path disappears in the unpaved parking area adjacent to the loop road, and its continuation is difficult to find, indeed. It reappears again in the brush below the horse trough and corral at Juniper Camp. From this point to its terminus the intimate trail is in excellent shape (it reportedly has recently been improved by an Eagle Scout as an individual project); it follows countours below the Summit Highway, offering dramatic views of the grassy meadows below.

Grade. For most of its length the trail is relatively level. Acceptable grades occur when the trail crosses streams and gullies.

Width and Clearance. A narrow path, but acceptable for both horse and foot traffic.

Drainage and Erosion. The trail has been built across several gullies by compacting dirt on top of brush; no drainage pipes were used. It is quite likely that heavy runoff will damage these carefully built gully crossings. Installation of drains appears to be presently a second priority project. Otherwise the trail is in excellent shape, with good provisions for drainage.

Trail Markers. The trail is presently unmarked at the Juniper Camp trailhead near the horse corral. Some markers are needed here. Signs are needed at the junction of Summit and Deer Flat Trails to identify each.

Laterals. The first short trail section (starting at the Deer Flat fire road) is criss-crossed by paths. This trail portion is not too important anyway, and obliteration of laterals is not practical in the middle of a heavy use area; therefore, no

immediate improvement is recommended. Similarly, better definition of a trail across the unpaved Juniper Camp parking area is not presently considered practical.

Recommendation. Except for trail markers, the trail is acceptable in its present condition.

Edith and Frank Valle-Riestra

September 5, 1976

JUNIPER TRAIL

Alignment: The trail (descending direction) starts at the far western end of the lower summit parking lot and ends at the group camping area at Juniper Camp, adjacent to the Summit Highway. The trail is correctly drawn on topographic maps. An initial short section skirts the fence of the communications tower next to the parking lot and plunges to the Summit Highway below. The trail continues on the other side of the highway; it skirts still another massive communications installation and descends sharply toward a long, level ridge (Moses Rock Ridge), passing through fine specimens of chaparral, laurel, and oak. The relatively level crest is followed up to a saddle just above Juniper Camp; here the trail turns sharply downhill, and traces of it essentially disappear in a network of haphazard trails marring the overused slopes above the campground. The trail is one of the most important and attractive ones on the mountain; it offers direct connection between a primary campground and the summit, and it well merits major repair work required to meet minimum criteria. No major rerouting is necessary.

Grade: About 200 yards below the second communications installation, a digger pine at the side of the trail marks the beginning of an entirely unacceptable trail stretch. The site is marked with yellow flag No. 1 tied to the pine. The grade here reaches 50%; the trail is grossly eroded, and the area is badly chewed up by climbers seeking gentler grades upward. The footing is treacherous, and one of the investigators fell in spite of extra caution. The existing stretch (about 150 yards) should be obliterated as well as can be managed with rock fill and brush. A new foot (and horse) path should be constructed, incorporating switchbacks and acceptable grades. The chaparral in this area is not at all dense, and new construction can be accomplished with little damage to plant life.

The final trail section plunging from Moses Rock Ridge to Juniper Camp is unacceptable. The barely discernible trail has grades approaching an astounding 80%, and the footing is dangerously slippery due to heavy fall of oak and laurel leaves. Construction of a new trail with acceptable switchbacks is mandatory; obliteration of casual foot paths is also a must.

Width and Clearance. Except for the problem areas, trail dimensions are acceptable for both foot and horse traffic. Some pruning is needed in the dense brushy area below the summit parking lot.

Drainage and Erosion. A few water bars are needed on the steeper part of the trail just below the parking lot, and again just before the flagged stretch that needs relocation. The trail construction as it approaches the Summit Highway from above is particularly admirable and should serve as an example of proper application of auxiliary structures. It is understood that any new construction will incorporate proper erosion control.

Trail Markers. Almost no markers exist. The trailhead at the summit end is very well hidden, indeed, at the far end of the lower parking lot. Once the trail is located, however, it is unmistakable; the same cannot be said of the Juniper Camp trailhead. Here there not only are no markers, but the maze of casual paths makes it almost impossible to locate the desired trail. Clearly, proper definition and marking of the trailhead are needed. Well visible markers are also needed at the Summit Highway crossing, which is presently not obvious.

Laterals. A lateral trail veers off sharply just below the lower communications installation; it appears to be used by the personnel manning the building. The lateral should be obliterated, or else the main trail should be clearly marked. At the saddle above Juniper Camp, a small trail, apparently established over the years by hikers from the campground, climbs a look-out knoll on Moses Rock Ridge. The trail should be kept in its present state (without improvement work), but, again, the sharp turn in the main trail should be marked.

Notes: There is a great deal of litter below the parking lot at the upper trailhead; this should be cleaned up.

Recommendations: Major repair work is needed, but the beauty of the environment and views merits the effort. The removal of the communications equipment should be a long range goal. Regrettably, the massive concrete structures are probably permanent, since removal would be prohibitively costly. The trail is acceptable for both riding and hiking.

Edith and Frank Valle-Riestra

**September 5, 1976**

**Note: Juniper Trail is being reconstructed by the Youth Conservation Corps.**

**July 2, 1977**

## Northern Slopes

The trails on the northern slopes of Mount Diablo are of a different nature than those of the southern slopes. The trails on the north side have been off-limits to most people because of limited access and private property. Most all the trails other than fire roads have been built and maintained by the local horsemen, and have been in use for many years. Now, due to recent acquisitions, and encroachment by developers in Clayton, this unique and wonderful area is being used by horsemen and hikers alike. The growth in Clayton Valley is now up to the state park boundary. This has brought an opening-up of this once-untouched wilderness on the north side of the mountain.

The recent fire has caused many short-term changes, and perhaps some long-term scars, but the mountain is still there, and so is the park. Already the natural processes are bringing regrowth and regeneration. In a short time the fire will be a thing of the past, and there will be new and exciting areas to explore and enjoy.

Many of the trails on the north side will suffer from the winter's runoff, with a lack of watershed cover in many areas, so now is the time to plan for the future and proceed with trail work. Signs are completely absent from the northern slopes, which would keep the public from using shortcuts and bad trails. Signing is a high priority.

Mitchell Canyon and Deer Flat Fire Roads
Fire road through White Canyon (Red Road)
Mitchell Rock Trail
Eagle Peak Trail
Prospectors Gap Fire Road
Meridian Ridge and Cardinet Oaks Fire Roads
Back Creek Trail and branches to Donner Canyon
Donner Canyon Fire Road (Road to Hetherington Ranch)
Hetherington Loop (Donner Creek Trail)
Lower Donner Trail

Middle Trail (to Big Springs)
Falls Trail
Bald Ridge Trail
North Peak Trail

MITCHELL CANYON AND DEER FLAT FIRE ROADS

The road begins at the entrance of Mitchell Canyon and proceeds up the canyon. At the bottom of the canyon, the site of Mitchell Creek Park, there are several other fire roads that join in the canyon. From the second gate, the fire road from across the open grassland joins the Mitchell Canyon Fire Road, coming down to it over a steep wooded hill. The fire road continues at an even grade on the eastern side above the creek. It would be quite easy to have the trail go along the creek rather than on the fire road, and it would also be practical. The road rises up to the site of the reservoir, and continues until it crosses the creek and heads south on the western side of the creek. The grade is quite level. It proceeds to the site of the old upper pool, and then to the old state park boundary and fence line. The road to this point is fine, but the creek is damaged from bulldozers, as is the intersection to White Canyon and Red Road about half way up the road to this point.

From the old boundary line, the fire road begins to climb steeply. The bulldozers have made a new road next to the creek bed that should be returned to a natural condition, so the alders and creek plants can recover. The steep road wends its way back and forth to Deer Flat, where it forks, and continues west, then south, to Juniper Camp. It is in good condition, though quite steep in many spots. Bulldozer damage is quite prevalent in the Deer Flat area.

Bob Doyle
August 1977

FIRE ROAD THROUGH WHITE CANYON (RED ROAD)

This fire road was extensively bulldozed to stop the fire, and a large fire break was cut on both sides of the creek. The road leaves Mitchell Canyon midway to the old park boundary, and proceeds through a gap to the western extremity of the park on the Ygnacio Valley side. At a point approaching the boundary,

a fire road climbs to a point on the lower end of Olofson Ridge. The final 100 feet has an erosion problem which can be corrected by a little grading and a few water bars.

From this point, near the old Soto Ranch on the ridge, it is suggested that a trail be constructed following the contour into Deer Flat. This would afford a grand view of Mitchell Canyon looking east and complete a loop with Mitchell Canyon. This would also facilitate a direct trail to the confines of the park south and west of Juniper Camp with the completion of the regional trail from the terminous of the California Recreation Trail.

George Cardinet
Bob Doyle
August 1977

MITCHELL ROCK TRAIL

From the Mitchell Canyon entrance, due south about 300 yards, a dead end fire road mars a beautiful grassy slope, terminating in the stand of Coulter pines. Immediately at this point, the trail takes off north and west, following reasonable grades around Mitchell Rock, to an overlook high on the side of Uncle Sam Canyon with a view of Mount Zion, Mitchell Canyon, and Red Road. From this point it proceeds east and south on a switching course, eventually coming out at the top of Twin Peaks, joining Eagle Peak Trail. Some hand work to widen the tread may be advisable, as well as a few water bars. This is a scenic trail, featuring a couple of forest types and extensive rock outcroppings. It makes possible a loop from its juncture with the Eagle Peak Trail, down to Back Canyon, or over Eagle Peak and Murchio Gap, to the trails deriving from there.

George Cardinet
April 1977

EAGLE PEAK TRAIL

The trail starts at Murchio Gap and ends in Back Canyon. It is in very good shape from Murchio Gap over Eagle Peak. Recent work has eliminated the very steep portion on the north

side of the peak. A bit more tread work should be done. A few water bars might be required after a rain gives an indication of where to place them. There are three rocky promontories on the ridge between Eagle Peak and Twin Peaks. Just before the southernmost one, a bit of tread work is needed, and about two water bars. Just below it some work could be done on some rocks. A sledge will be required. The balance of the trail is fine to the juncture of the Mitchell Rock Trail.

From here, the Eagle Peak Trail goes east and down hill. The first section to an old wagon road needs relocation. Parts are unduly steep with evidences of erosion. A few water bars are also required. There is little semblance of the old wagon road. It is now just a trail, though here and there the old cut is evident. Some tread improvement is needed. The wagon road continues south for about 300 yards and terminates at an old mine working. Here someone constructed a wall to retain material, providing an area in which to turn a wagon around. Part of the wall has fallen from the weight of a slide above, and a few trees have grown up. The trail and the turn-around area should be rehabilitated. It is of historic significance, and should be a lesson on the stamina and physical prowess and endurance of our predecessors. What a tremendous outpouring of labor for a barren hole in the rock!

At the Murchio line, the wagon road continues north along a drift fence which terminates at the corrals lying midway between Mitchell Creek Park and the Cap Wilson place, now gone. The last few hundred yards are no longer visible. This requires a little brush cutting and should be rehabilitated. From the Murchio line, a series of switchbacks goes down into Back Canyon, joining Back Creek Trail about 200 to 300 feet south of the Murchio Gate. These switchbacks could be greatly improved now that the Murchio property is in the park. The fence line does not now need to be respected.

It is suggested that from about the third switchback, a new trail be constructed at an even contour across the mountain face to the point of beginning of Mitchell Rock Trail.

This is a lovely wooded area, largely through Coulter pines, which with existing trails makes another loop from the south. It has already been ridden several times, but as yet the tread is not discernible to the newcomer. A few specimen oaks lie on the route.

George Cardinet
April 1977

Due to the recent fire, this trail may wash out in many places. Several steep spots may now be realigned to combat erosion and slippage by the trail user. The tread needs to be widened and switchbacks placed in bad spots. Because the fire eliminated the brush, it will be much easier to improve the trail.

Bob Doyle
August 1977

PROSPECTORS GAP FIRE ROAD

The fire road runs from Deer Flat over Murchio Gap and across the north face of the mountain to Prospectors Gap. It is in fair condition until it meets Deer Flat Creek, where the bulldozers have again done a lot of creek bed damage. From here it rises steeply up to Murchio Gap. This is a problem area because it is too steep and erosion is constant. From the gap, the road continues nearly level to Big Spring, where large canyon oaks and bay laurels form a lovely canopy a few yards from the park boundary. From Big Spring the road climbs an excessive grade to Prospectors Gap. The grade is eroding, and if a trail is constructed, switchbacks should be used. The road continues over Prospectors Gap toward Morgan Territory Road.

George Cardinet
Aug. 1977

MERIDIAN RIDGE AND CARDINET OAKS FIRE ROADS

Donner Canyon Fire Road intersects this fire road which

climbs up Meridian Ridge, northwest through the Coulter pines that were almost eliminated by the fire. It then turns south and runs steeply straight up the ridge line. This is extremely steep and is difficult for both man and beast. The fire road intersects the road from Murchio Gap to Big Spring.

From the point where Donner Canyon Fire Road intersects, Cardinet Oaks Fire Road goes down and crosses Donner Creek and a permanent spring that forms a small pond in the road bed. It turns north climbing to a view point of Donner Canyon, then turns south, then east, across the base of Mount Olympia, climbing to a plateau at Cardinet Oaks out of the park. The fire road continues east to the Trail Ride grounds.

George Cardinet
Aug. 1977

BACK CREEK TRAIL AND BRANCHES TO DONNER CANYON

This trail is in good shape the length of Back Canyon and up to the Meridian Ridge Fire Road. At the Murchio gate, a trail takes off to the east and south joining another Back Canyon tributary trail in about a half mile at a flat on the lower reaches of Meridian Ridge immediately west of the Hetherington house. It follows a gentle grade, except for the first 20 feet, and is in good shape. This trail should be closed in wet weather, as it tends to be boggy, and horses leave deep hoof prints, which when dry make miserable footing. The second branch to Donner Canyon leaves the canyon about a quarter mile beyond the first. It, too, is in good shape, having been recently improved.

The Back Creek Trail was an old wagon road servicing several prospect holes and adits en route. These are historically significant, and should be preserved. At the point where the trail starts to climb to Meridian Ridge, the wagon road takes a canyon to the west, although at this point no semblance of the old road is left. A trail is there, however, looking little more than a game trail. Farther on, the road again becomes apparent. It is badly overgrown and should be cleaned out with

some minor tread work, as the canyon makes for fascinating exploration.

George Cardinet
April 1977

The trail along the creek in several spots will need to be reworked after the winter rains. At Murchio gate, where the tributary goes to Donner Canyon, the trail should be redesigned to lessen erosion on the steep grade. The bulldozers also did damage to the first part of the trail and it will need to be worked on. At the point where the trail enters the creek bed, it might be advisable to cut a new trail above the creek, making it a more permanent trail.

Bob Doyle
August 1977

DONNER CANYON FIRE ROAD (ROAD TO HETHERINGTON RANCH)

The fire road enters the state park at the green gate to the Murchio parcel. The road then forks. The western fork heads uphill through open grassland to connect to another fire road which goes west, across Back Creek and over to Mitchell Canyon. This fire road also has several offshoots, two up Back Canyon, joining together and stopping at the old Murchio gate. Another forks north across the grassland, then south into Mitchell Creek Park. These routes afford fine views of the Coulter pine forest on the north slopes of Twin Peaks.

The road to Hetherington Ranch runs along the western side of Donner Creek. It is a gradual grade, but the soil is weak and is subject to erosion and deep mud in winter. There are two particular spots that need attention. One is an old wood-cutting grade which steeply climbs up the hill south of where the Cap Wilson home used to be. This is on the western side of the creek. The other spot is a large washout just before the gate to the Clayton Oaks property. It is forming a large gully, and sliding is evident.

The road then enters Clayton Oaks and leaves the state

park. The part of the road which is outside the park is surrounded by blue oaks and riparian plants. It is a lovely area, and although it burned in the fire, the vegetation was not destroyed. It includes large stands of big-berried manzanita, which were somehow spared. This part of the road is very muddy during the winter months because of the thick woodland.

The fire road again enters the park at the Hetherington gate, which burned down in the fire. It leaves the woodland and enters grassland. You cannot see the Hetherington cabin until you are within several yards of it because of the many large introduced and native trees surrounding it. The road splits, the eas ternmost branch ending at the cabin, the other continuing around the house to the west and south.

There is already a trail with about a one foot tread along the creek from the green gate to the Hetherington cabin. This is a good alternative to the road, and is just beautiful when Donner Creek is running. The trail needs both tread work and brushing. If the state could acquire this property, it would make a most practical and esthetic trail.

From the ranch house, Hetherington built a trail up the hill to the west, reaching the saddle and continuing south to intersect the main trail between Back and Donner Canyons. This trail is about 18 inches wide and well designed. All it lacks is good definition at the western end.

Just south of the cabin, the fire road continues up the western side of the canyon, leaving open grassland and entering woodland. After entering the woods, it climbs at an excessive grade, where there is an erosion problem. An old grade exists that could be used to skirt around part of the steep climb, making a more feasible trail for hikers and riders. The fire road then levels off to a more gradual climb, where there is an offshoot trail to Back Canyon. This area was full of manzanitas, many of which burned in the fire. The fire road continues to climb, and there is another offshoot east, forming the Hetherington Loop Trail. Beyond this, the road climbs another steep grade where there may also be some problems. It then intersects

the Meridian Ridge Fire Road. The upper part of this fire road is on serpentine soil and is easily eroded. Many interesting plants are in this area.

Bob Doyle
August 1977

HETHERINGTON LOOP TRAIL (DONNER CREEK TRAIL)

Just beyond the Hetherington cabin a beautiful trail begins, joining the fire road and forming a loop. The first part of this trail was badly bulldozed during the fire, but a foot bridge built by Hetherington still crosses the creek. The bulldozer only went along the trail for a short distance past the old barn. The trail follows an old grade which was almost overgrown, continuing above the eastern side of the creek through oak woodland. A short distance past the barn there is an offshoot east to Cardinet Oaks and the Trail Ride grounds. The trail crosses the creek, and intersects a second branch to Cardinet Oaks.

At the point where the second branch trail leaves the loop trail, there were several large maple trees. One of the largest burned and fell across the trail. This is a small meadow. The trail then climbs, leaving the creek bed, bending northwest up a very steep grade. This is a very fragile area with many beautiful wildflowers and the trail is excessively steep. It would be possible to reroute this part following the contour, then joining back into the loop trail, at least until the vegetation can recover from the fire. The loop continues past the steep spot and levels off until it again climbs, meeting the Donner Canyon Fire Road.

The Hetherington Loop Trail is a delightful trail which is short enough for a nature trail and exhibits many of the interesting features of the Donner Canyon flora.

Bob Doyle
August 1977

LOWER DONNER TRAIL

The Lower Donner Trail branches off the Donner Creek Trail and climbs to Cardinet Oaks. The initial several hundred feet climb through a mixed oak forest. Occasional steep spots can be easily redesigned now that the fire has cleared out the underbrush in this area. On a flat, the trail meets a second branch from the Donner Creek Trail at the stream crossing, sometimes called the Wasserman Trail. The area of the trail running north from here was bulldozed in the fire. The trail tops a ridge, overlooking an open field badly scarred by bulldozers. Here the route turns east, climbing along the south side of a ridge through woods and clearings, with scenic rock outcrops. Again there are a few steep spots. The trail is well cleared, as much brush in the area burned.

Near the park boundary the trail forks. The left branch climbs to Cardinet Oaks. At a short climb as it goes south the grade could be improved and two water bars installed, and about 100 yards before it joins the Cardinet Oaks Fire Road minor improvement work needs to be accomplished. The right branch runs mostly level, within the park, and joins the Cardinet Oaks Fire Road. It runs through a large stand of manzanita that was badly burned in the recent fire. Short of the trail end, a trail should be constructed meeting the road at a more easterly point. An old road grade is apparent which could be used. The purpose of this trail would be to allow visits to the mid-section line marker. The old witness tree and the mound of rocks put around the surveyor stake of the United States survey of 1869 are still there. Better means of their preservation should be undertaken and the spot appropriately marked.

George Cardinet
Chris Valle-Riestra
August 28, 1977

MIDDLE TRAIL (TO BIG SPRINGS)

At a point about 50 yards above the intersection of Donner Canyon and Meridian Ridge Fire Roads a well worn trail climbs

south through the burned manzanita forest where native bunch grasses dominate the ground cover and will soon recover. The two-foot-wide trail is eroding badly from wear, and will most likely worsen after a winter's runoff. The first section of this scenic trail needs rerouting and erosion control. It continues climbing steeply, and the views of upper Donner Canyon are breathtaking. The trail continues south, up the western side of the canyon, and crosses several tributaries of Donner Creek. It follows the contour at reasonable grades for the most part and is in good condition except for the obvious trouble spots.

At the point where the Falls Trail heads east, about a third of the way along this trail, the trail should be rerouted to provide a switchback, eliminating a trouble spot. Above this spot is another area that had already been rerouted because of steepness and erosion. The old trail scar is still evident and should be worked. The trail continues above the canyon and joins Prospectors Gap Fire Road just a few hundred feet from Big Spring. The top switchbacks are too steep in spots, and should be reconstructed.

George Cardinet
Bob Doyle
August 1977

FALLS TRAIL

a. Lower Falls Trail

The Falls Trail leaves Middle Trail and proceeds east, steeply downhill, and then south, where it splits into the lower and upper sections. Both trails need a lot of work on the downhill portions, including switchbacks and rerouting.

The Lower Falls Trail goes through a beautiful area, down into and across Donner Creek at the mouth of Wild Oat Canyon below the rugged face of North Peak. The lower fall is small, but there are picturesque ponds and rock formations. The trail then heads northeast, rising above the creek along the bottom of Mount Olympia and joining the Cardinet Oaks Fire Road at a

sharp turn. All of the Lower Falls Trail is in the park.

The trail is in need of much tread work and erosion control. The grades on both slopes of Donner Canyon are very steep and need extensive reconstruction. There have been many slides along this section of trail since the fire, and much of the trail tread has been destroyed. The area should be protected from overuse, as it is a fragile and pristine part of the park, already very popular.

b. Upper Falls Trail

The Upper Falls Trail continues southeast from the point where the Lower Falls Trail drops into Donner Creek. It follows a rising contour and crosses the west fork of Donner Creek (flag C-1), from Big Springs, then climbs across the rocky lower face of North Peak, heading east out of the park. It follows the contour going into and across Wild Oat Canyon, the east fork of Donner Canyon. This is the area of the largest waterfalls, with contorted and deformed rocks. The trail climbs steadily out of the canyon and bends northwest around Mount Olympia, heading northeast up to the Gregory Ranch and the Trail Ride grounds. Most of this trail is out of the park on the Zippe property, except for the first portion. This exciting trail needs better definition and tread widening, as well as erosion control.

George Cardinet
Bob Doyle
August 1977

BALD RIDGE TRAIL

This trail follows the ridge from where the Eagle Peak Trail emerges at Murchio Gap, and goes to Prospectors Gap. A fork just below Ransome Point goes on to the vicinity of the Main Peak but was never finished, although one can get through on foot or horseback.

The trail is in good shape except for one, or possibly two, places between the turn off below Ransome Point and where it emerges at Prospectors Gap. They both involve rock surfaces which horses have been negotiating for twenty years. However,

one in particular should be eliminated, considering the park's responsibility. This will entail cutting of brush and a trail for 100 feet or less. The other questionable spot is even shorter. There is also one cliff that should be evaluated. Once again, this trail has been in use for twenty years without incident.

On the ridge is a prospect hole at a manganese outcropping (or so it was identified to me).

George Cardinet
April 1977

NORTH PEAK TRAIL

a. Devils Elbow to Devils Pulpit

Attempts have evidently been made(reportedly by a 4H group at park officials' direction) to obliterate the spectacular North Peak Trail, originally constructed by the CCC. Features such as retaining walls have been destroyed, and the trail should, indeed, be abandoned, since the new Klee Trail connects the two landmarks. However, more obliteration work is needed. In particular, because of the erroneously pointing Summit Trail marker at Devil's Elbow, the first part of the North Peak Trail still appears to be used.

The Klee Trail is a path with acceptable width and clearance passing through open country well below the rocky outcrops on the south slope of the main peak. The alignment is satisfactory; in a few places the path needs to be cut more deeply to improve footing. Below Devil's Elbow, the Klee Trail continues in a southwesterly direction, but a spur climbs very steeply (32%) to the highway shoulder at Devil's Elbow. This spur and another steep (24%) section farther east should be rerouted with acceptable switchbacks and drainage (likely to be muddy in winter). Markers should be placed at the trail split and on the highway at Devil's Elbow identifying the routes.

Chris, Edith, and Frank Valle-Riestra
September 5, 1976

b. Devils Pulpit to Prospectors Gap

The second section of the North Peak Trail runs alternately through scrub oak thickets and steep meadows, past rock cliffs. There are sweeping views of North Peak. The tread is 18 to 24 inches wide and clearance is adequate. The trail descends

gently at first, but after the junction with the Klee Trail there is an excessively steep down grade. Some distance beyond lies a longer steep section. The trail then runs nearly level before emerging on a major ridge. Following an old fire break down the ridge to the gap, the route is extremely steep and should be rerouted.

Chris Valle-Riestra
July 1977

c. Prospectors Gap to Mount Olympia

From Prospectors Gap, the North Peak Fire Road climbs steadily to a gap in the ridge of North Peak, where an electrical generator is located. The road crosses the ridge, dips slightly, and climbs extremely steeply to the communications facilities on the summit of North Peak. Shortly past the generator, a horse trail branches to the left. It initially follows an old road grade, but soon drops away from it. It descends gradually in most places, but drops quite steeply to avoid cliffs in several spots. The tread is about 18 inches wide and clearance is adequate. After about three-quarters of a mile, the path emerges on the north ridge of the peak, and descends steeply for a few hundred feet. It contours around the west side of two small peaks, then climbs very steeply to its terminus at the fire road on the summit of Mount Olympia.

Chris Valle-Riestra
September 5, 1977

## TRAIL CORRIDORS--REGIONAL PARKS AND COUNTY OPEN SPACE AREAS TO MOUNT DIABLO STATE PARK

For over forty years there has been interest in Contra Costa County trails. It is planned that over 14,000 acres of regional park land and county open space will be connected by a system of trails for all to use and enjoy. Mount Diablo, with over 12,000 acres of state park land, is at the center of the system. Rising 3849 feet above the Diablo Valley, Mount Diablo stands high over the surrounding hills. These wooded hills are the site of several large parks operated by the East Bay Regional Park District. The district adopted its master plan on December 4, 1973. The plan designated a trail policy, reading as follows:

> "The District, in coordination with other governmental agencies in the two counties, will acquire, develop and operate a Regional Trail System with the overall objective of providing a comprehensive system of trails both through and connecting its parklands with each other and with other trail systems, and urban communities. To this end the Two-County Regional Trail Plan adopted by the District June 20, 1972, will be regularly reviewed and updated."[1]

At present, 14,000 acres of public lands surrounding Mount Diablo are within the boundaries of five regional parks and the open space areas of Walnut Creek and Concord. Several corridors are undergoing public hearings by EBRPD and others are in planning.

### Las Trampas--Mount Diablo Trail

Las Trampas Regional Wilderness is located above the cities of Alamo and Danville. It comprises two large ridges, Las Trampas Ridge on the east and Rocky Ridge on the west, with Bolinger Canyon between. The park now includes 3298 acres of rugged woodland, chaparral, and grassland.

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1 East Bay Regional Park District Master Plan, p. 30

The trail, some seven miles long, will go east down Las Trampas Ridge, into San Ramon Valley between Alamo and Danville, then, passing under Interstate Highway 680, to Alamo Ridge, and to the Wall Point area of Mount Diablo. This hiking and riding trail has been designated a high-priority project. It has met opposition by local homeowners in the developed areas. However, the park district has acquired easements in new developments in the area east of I-680, and few alternatives are available for a connection between Las Trampas and Mount Diablo.

The MDIA Trails Committee has recommended that this trail enter Mount Diablo State Park through Dan Cook Canyon rather than over Wall Point, although the trail may go first to Wall Point, then into Dan Cook Canyon. The Wall Point area is to be donated by the Blackhawk Development Company.

Briones--Mount Diablo Trail

Briones Regional Park has almost 5,000 acres of rolling hills and oak-wooded canyons. It is situated above Diablo Valley, west of Walnut Creek, Pleasant Hill, and Pacheco. The following is a summary of the trail route prepared by the EBRPD Trail Coordinator. It will be a multiuse trail, approximately thirteen miles long, with portions paved for bicycles.

> "The proposed trail leaves the southeast corner of Briones Regional Park and follows Lafayette Ridge to Pleasant Hill Road. Pleasant Hill Road will be crossed in the vicinity of Springhill Road, and the trail will go east over Acalanes Ridge, then onto EBMUD's Mokelumne Aqueduct right-of-way on the east side of the ridge. The Mokelumne Aqueduct right-of-way will be followed through a portion of the City of Walnut Creek to Geary Road, where it intersects the Contra Costa Canal right-of-way. The trail will then follow the canal to Heather Farms Park and go south through the park and generally along the route of the Ygnacio Canal. The trail will leave the Ygnacio Canal, climb up the ridge, cross La Casa Via, and enter the toe of Shell Ridge. From Shell Ridge, the

trail passes through publicly-owned lands, Walnut Creek Open Space and Diablo Foothills Regional Park, into Mount Diablo State Park through the newly acquired Friedan and Rossi property."

This trail is an excellent example of cooperation between the involved agencies, and not only traverses beautiful park lands, but provides a wonderful route up Shell Ridge to Mount Diablo State Park. Construction of the trail has been funded by the 1976 State Park Bond Act (Proposition 2). There is some opposition to use of the canal for the trail.

Black Diamond Mines--Mount Diablo Trail

Black Diamond Mines is a 3,443 acre Regional Preserve, which has within its boundaries the sites of the historic coal mining towns of Somersville and Stewartville. The preserve is an interesting area of rugged sandstone ridges and valleys north of Mount Diablo. It is also known for its diverse flora and fauna, and is the northernmost limit of the distribution of the Coulter pine.

The trail is proposed to start at the western end of the preserve and proceed west along Black Diamond Way (a dirt road) through a canyon with a small creek and blue oak woodland, along an easement next to the Center Street extension in the City of Clayton, and south along another easement of varying width next to Mount Diablo Creek. The creek runs through the Easly development and crosses Marsh Creek Road at an undercrossing large enough for equestrians to use. The trail will then come out of Mount Diablo Creek, cross El Molino Drive, and proceed south along an easement next to Donner Creek. Donner Creek winds its way through phase four of the Regency Woods development and then onto Clayton open space in the canyon between Regency Woods and Dana Hills. In this area large trees and a small walnut orchard line the creek. The trail enters the gate to the Murchio parcel, where it forks west and proceeds across open grassland to Mitchell Canyon.

Morgan Territory--Mount Diablo Trail

Morgan Territory Regional Preserve contains 1,525 acres,

southeast of Mount Diablo in the high hills of Morgan Territory. This is an area of open grassland and densely wooded canyons. A trail is planned from the preserve to Mount Diablo, but no route has been set. The trail will proceed northwest about ten miles through rugged undeveloped land. The Trails Committee has suggested that the trail proceed from the preserve into the inner Black Hills, entering the park in the Knob Cone Point area. It has also been suggested that a trail could proceed down Curry Canyon to Morgan Territory Road, then to the regional preserve. This trail would be more difficult because of the many different property owners.

Lime Ridge Trail

This has been proposed not by the Regional Park District, but by the Cities of Concord and Walnut Creek. Lime Ridge is a long ridge extending northwest from Mount Diablo and was the site of several quarries which obtained lime from surface deposits for the former Cowell cement plant. The City of Concord has passed a bond act to acquire lower Lime Ridge, which was due to be developed, but has now been saved by the will of the voters. Lower Lime Ridge extends almost to the Concord BART Station. Walnut Creek has also acquired large portions of upper Lime Ridge as open space. All that is needed to connect these public lands, and preserve the entire ridge, is additional land acquisition between the state park and Walnut Creek open space. The MDIA Trails Committee recommends that if a trail is constructed up Lime Ridge, it enter the park at White Canyon (Red Road), and descend to Mitchell Canyon. This trail would provide non-motorized access from the entire Concord area into the park.

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE TRAILS

It is the opinion of the Mount Diablo Interpretive Association that most trails on Mount Diablo are adequate for public use, but need an active maintenance program. In some cases, trails should be reconstructed or rerouted to meet minimum standards, taking into consideration the mountain's unique flora. As more land comes into the park, it will be possible to connect existing trails, making loop systems. Only the minimum signs that will prevent the trail user from becoming lost are necessary. Further, we encourage the State Park Commission to continue acquiring additions to the park, to complete the trail corridors and fully protect the unique values of this wonderful resource for future generations to enjoy.

Trails are many things: they are a means of transportation, they are an enjoyable form of recreation. Perhaps most important, they are an esthetic experience which bring us in touch with the natural world and get us away from the noise and sights of a fast-moving age.

Thank you,
Bob Doyle, Chairman
MDIA Trails Committee

Mount Diablo Interpretive Association
TRAIL INVENTORY AND ASSESSMENT

The Mount Diablo Interpretive Association is preparing a trails plan for Mount Diablo State Park. As a first step, we are asking volunteers to help us inventory and assess the adequacy of the existing trails on the mountain. Each volunteer will walk or ride a section of trail and report how well it meets the standards for state-maintained trails. The basic response we want from you is a written report. At strategic points along the trail, or at any major problem spots you describe in your report, please tie a numbered flag to a tree or bush and mark the spot with the number on the map provided. To minimize visual pollution, please use no more flags than necessary. Flagging will help us to use your report in the field later on.

There are several criteria by which you should judge your trail section. Please report on each of these for each stretch of trail. The standards for state trails are given. Please indicate if the trail meets these standards, but if not, report how close to meeting the criteria it comes, and whether you feel it is capable of being upgraded.

1. Alignment. The trail should follow a logical route without unnecessary sharp turns or changes in elevation. The route should fit the landscape, adapting to the lay of the land rather than cutting across its grain.

2. Grade. A 10 percent grade is desirable. 15 percent is usually the maximum, but steeper sections are allowed where safety and erosion are not problems. Percentage grades are based on feet of rise per 100 feet run. For example, a trail that gains 15 feet of elevation in 100 horizontal feet is built to a 15 percent grade. Percentage grades correspond to degrees of angle as follows:

| % Grade | Degrees |
|---|---|
| 5 | 3 |
| 10 | 6 |
| 15 | 8.5 |
| 20 | 11 |
| 25 | 14 |
| 30 | 16.5 |
| 40 | 22 |
| 50 | 26.5 |

3. Width. A 2 foot tread width is correct for most riding and hiking trails. Trails for hikers only may be as narrow as 12 inches. The width should suit the terrain traversed.

4. Clearance. 10 feet overhead clearance and 8 feet side-to-side is required for horses. Major hiker-only trails should have 8 feet overhead clearance and 4 feet side-to-side, but smaller foot trails require only enough clearance to permit passage. Large trees may be excepted from these standards, and especially scenic shrubs and trees should be avoided by the trail route.

5. Drainage and erosion. All water-courses should have good crossings. Water bars should be provided where needed. Are there gullies forming in the trail? Trails running straight up hills tend to cause this problem. Has a deep rut been cut by horses? Are there any active slides across the trail? Is the soil too loose to provide a stable trail base? Try to imagine how winter storms will affect the trail.

6. Structures. Bridges may be needed to cross large streams or those with high banks. Retaining walls may be necessary in slide areas, and railings along cliff tops. If there are any existing structures, are they in good repair? All structures are expensive, so please indicate if there is any alternative to building one.

In addition to the above, please check to see if the trail route indicated on the map is accurate. Correct any errors. If you observe any branch trail not shown on the map, please indicate its location.

Finally, we want your over-all assessment of the trail. Can it be upgraded to a standard trail? Or, is the terrain such that a good trail cannot be maintained, and the route should be abandoned? Should it be designated a riding and hiking trail or for hikers only? and why? Are there major reroutings needed, and where should the relocated trail be built? Can better views be obtained from a new location? Do you have any ideas for new trails, and if so, why are they needed?

If you wish to make any other comments, please do not hesitate to do so. Your help is greatly appreciated, and will contribute to the future quality of the Mount Diablo trail system.

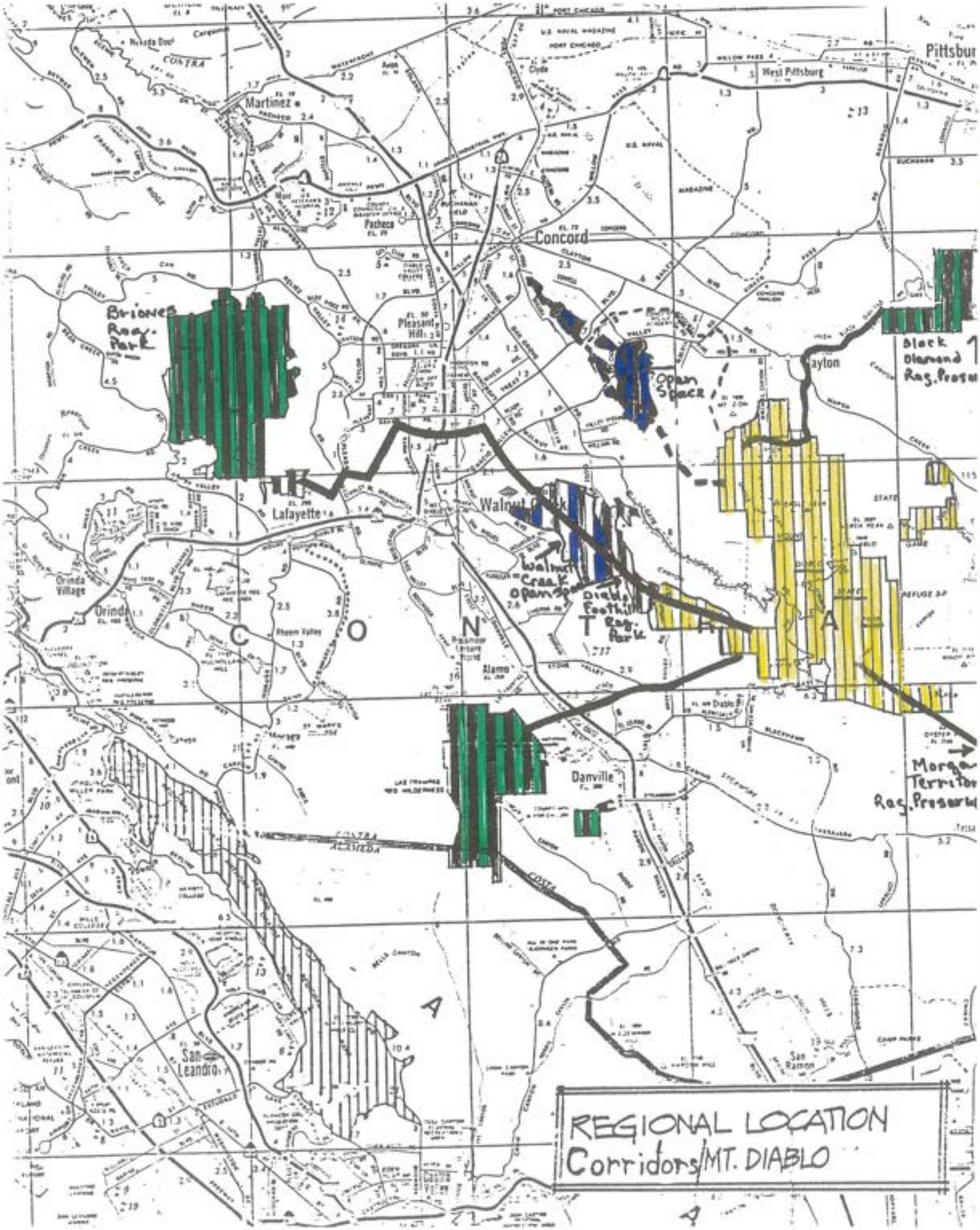
Chris Valle-Riestra, Chairman
MDIA Trails Committee



8/13/76

Additions and Corrections to Assesment

1. page 9, The old stage road went though the Smiley and Curtola property.
2. page 10, The Green Ranch road is actually the Pioneer Camp road.
3. The summit trail could be reworked to go between the two roads at the Summit by going on old trail in the center island, the trail has been flagged.
4. page 16 should read Trail To Knob Cone Point
5. page 23, Hidden pond should remain undeveloped and hidden
6. page 34, old wagon trail is a high priority for trail use excellent views, and good tred
7. page 39, the Middle trail up Donner Canyon was the original trail.
8. page 34 , the committee recommends that old trail to North Peak is of value, the trail need rock work but is a good hikers trail with wonderful views.


Martinez
Concord
Pacheco
Pleasant Hill
Briones Reg. Park
Lafayette
Walnut Creek
Walnut Creek open space
Diablo Foothills Reg. Park
Open Space
Black Diamond Reg. Preserve
Orinda Village
Orinda
Rheem Valley
Alamo
Danville
San Leandro
San Ramon
Pittsburg
West Pittsburg
CONTRA COSTA
ALAMEDA
REGIONAL LOCATION
Corridors/MT. DIABLO

