

**San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail Steering Committee
Meeting Summary
July 18, 2006**

Next Meeting—Tuesday, October 3rd, 1:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m., BCDC

Key Outcomes

- ▶ The Water Trail Steering Committee (Committee) reviewed and discussed the four updated principles for water trail development and management. Committee members suggested further revisions, but they were generally supportive of the concepts described in each of the principles.
- ▶ The Committee discussed and recommended changes to the management strategies for access issues, trail head improvements and wildlife, habitat and water quality issues.

Action Items

Responsible	Task	Deadline
Steering Committee	Email or call Sara Polgar with any additional ideas and comments on the strategies (“Trail Head Development and Management Strategies to Address Access and Trail Head Improvements and Wildlife, Habitat and Water Quality Issues”)	8/4
Sara Polgar	Incorporate changes to the principles and strategies, and distribute to Committee	7/18

Note: Please contact Sara Polgar (415 352-3645, sarap@bcdc.ca.gov) for a copy of any of the documents mentioned below or with any questions.

Report on Rafting Birds Focus Meeting

Sara Polgar briefly summarized a meeting on rafting birds that occurred July 11. A sub-group of Committee members, stakeholders, staff and issue experts met to identify data sources on rafting birds and to generate ideas for how trail managers can be responsive to changing patterns of use. A one-page meeting summary is available.

Water Trail Concept

Staff introduced the Bay Area Water Trail concept to facilitate the Committee’s discussion of management principles and strategies and general understanding of the trail. The first component of the concept is a physical network or web of launch and landing sites (trail heads). A web concept, rather than a linear water trail concept, provides flexibility necessary to develop and manage a trail tested by unique Bay issues. The second component is the experience that trail users have on the water: both enjoying recreation on the Bay, and boating in a manner that is safe and protects environmental resources. Committee members and other meeting attendees generally supported the proposed concept. Two suggestions were to emphasize stewardship to reflect the active role of the trail in environmental protection and promoting safe boating, and to capture the notion of out-and-back, single-day trips.

Revised Water Trail Principles

Based on feedback received at the previous meeting on June 6th, staff expanded the scope of the management principles to address a broader suite of trail issues. At this meeting, the Committee reviewed and discussed these revised trail development and management principles.

Staff clarified that the principles set guidelines for developing new trail heads as well as incorporating existing launches into the trail. The Committee was supportive of the basic concepts underlying the principles. In addition to feedback summarized below, a suggestion was made to include a new principles that captures the marketing and business value of the trail.

Principle 1: Identifying critical areas that require special management or limiting access

- In addition to the criteria-based approach for identifying sensitive wildlife sites, call out those sites that are already known to be sensitive.
- Add the following to the list of critical areas: habitat that is sensitive to trail activities (e.g. eel grass beds); sites that are in the process of being restored and are not available or suitable for access; important species-specific feeding and refugia areas (e.g. brown pelicans on the breakwater south of Alameda Island); and areas with known marine debris hazards.
- Ensure that the list of sensitive wildlife and habitat areas reflects known potential impacts and does not become so broad as to lose its meaning for trail development and management.
- Include a more comprehensive list of agencies and organizations that trail staff should regularly consult on critical wildlife, habitat and water quality areas.
- Since Bay boating conditions are geographically and temporally dynamic, principle 2 should recognize natural conditions such as currents, tides, fog and winds that can pose hazards to NMSB users, and that the trail management role with respect to these critical areas is to inform users about these hazards.
- Include language that indicates the Water Trail plan is a living document and that the criteria for critical areas, and the identified areas themselves, need to be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

Principle 2: Conducting site assessment and planning for trail heads

- To help ensure that resource protection and other measures of a trail head improvement and management plan (second bullet on pg. 5) are carried out, specify that the provisions in the trail head plan must be legally enforceable.

Principle 3: Trail head development and management strategies

- Include stronger language for protection of wildlife (as in the first version of this principle).

Principle 4: The water trail ethic

- Under the “Schedule your trip in advance” sub-heading in Table 4, remind users to be aware of hours and fees at trail heads, and clarify that permits and reservations are site-dependent.

Enforcement and Implementation

During the discussion of the principles, meeting participants raised concerns about enforcement and asked questions about implementation of the plan. They recommended that the water trail plan clearly delineate jurisdictional divisions among enforcement entities (e.g. U.S. Coast Guard on the Bay, park rangers, harbor police, etc.) and include the regulations and codes relevant to the trail that

these entities enforce. It was also suggested that with the development of new or existing launch sites as part of the trail, responsible entities be identified for implementing and enforcing provisions of a trail head plan. Another suggestion was to include legally enforceable performance standards in a BCDC permit issued for water trail launch site improvements.

Concerns about implementation of the water trail plan carried over into the discussion of strategies (summarized below). The Committee discussed, but did not come to a conclusion on whether the water trail plan should selectively incorporate existing launch sites as trail heads in the network. Additionally, the Committee had questions about who will carry out the water trail plan and how policy recommendations will apply to different entities. In response, staff pointed out that this uncertainty exists because the Committee has not yet addressed implementation. ***The discussion of implementation is scheduled for Meeting 6 in November or December.*** In developing the work plan that the Committee reviewed and approved in Meeting 2, the staff felt that it was important to have a basis for trail improvements and management to address the issues that the Committee identified in the first meeting (e.g. NMSB access needs, safety, wildlife, habitat and water quality) prior to discussing implementation aspects of the plan. Staff also noted that BCDC expects to amend the Bay Plan to incorporate certain water trail initiatives that emerge from the planning process.

Trail Head Development and Management Strategies

Following on the review of the principles, the Committee discussed the revised strategies to address NMSB access issues, trail head improvements, and wildlife, habitat and water quality. (Please contact Sara Polgar (415 352-3645, sarap@bcdca.gov) for a copy of the revised strategies.) Feedback from the meeting is summarized below.

Strategy 1: Siting New Trail Heads or Increasing Capacity at Existing Launch Sites

- Add a sub-strategy to consider relocating existing launch sites that raise significant safety, wildlife or habitat issues to more suitable locations.

Strategy 2: Linking Access Points

- Expand to suggest trips or linkages that address specific interests or needs. For example, recommend routes that are good for different user skill levels, or offer specific facilities.

Strategy 4: Carrying Capacity

- Unless the plan has very specific criteria for conducting an assessment of a trail head's carrying capacity, this will not be a useful planning tool and could lead to inappropriate access restrictions.
- Carrying capacity (as a planning tool) could be tied to a management strategy that establishes a seasonal or year-round reservation system for some trail heads.

Strategy 5: Management Resources

- Specifically address funding for maintenance and enforcement in this strategy.

Strategy 14: Monitoring

- Recommend conducting pilot projects to monitor trail heads and a few different types of wildlife areas and habitats to develop and test monitoring methods and learn about potential impacts. The monitoring program(s) should be science-based.

A few suggestions were made to reorganize and expand **Strategies 15 (Outreach/Educational/ Interpretative Signage), 18 (Guided Trips, Docents and Rangers) and 20 (Boater-to-Boater Education)** to create a comprehensive set of education strategies. A variety of components (in addition to those already described in these strategies) were recommended for this:

- A separate outreach, education and training component for NMSB trainers and outfitters;
- Coordination with existing boating organizations to facilitate boater-to-boater education;
- Outreach to a variety of target audiences in multiple languages;
- Education on personal safety;
- Information on wildlife and habitats that people might see on the trail (e.g. a ‘critter card’ available from an interpretive kiosk);
- Criteria for a minimum number of educational programs offered annually at trail heads; and
- A specific recommendation to develop education programs to be offered to public schools.

Suggested New Strategies

- Include design criteria and guidelines for launch sites;
- Tailor trail activities to be compatible with the existing policies and plans of land and resource managers at and around trail heads; and
- Include funding strategies.

Please submit additional feedback on these strategies to Sara Polgar by Friday, August 4.

Introduction to Safety Issues

Staff introduced safety issues by showing part of a video on general navigational safety in the Bay, and distributing examples of outreach materials produced by a variety of boating-related organizations. The Committee will address safety and education in the next water trail meeting on October 3, 2006.

Meeting Participants

Steering Committee

Margot Brown, SF Bay Harbor Safety Committee
Arthur Feinstein, Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge
Cecily Harris, Bay Access, Western Sea Kayakers
Beth Huning, San Francisco Bay Joint Venture
Marilyn Latta, Save the Bay
Jim McGrath, Bay Access, SF Boardsailing Association
Barbara Salzman, Marin Audubon Society
Laura Thompson, ABAG Bay Trail Project
Penny Wells, Bay Access

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Ann Buell, California Coastal Conservancy
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Members of the Public

Winnie Chan, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, SF Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex
Frank and Janice Delfino, Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge
David Dolberg, Bay Access
Robert Johnson, Oyster Point Marina
Antoinette Romeo, Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation
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