Trail management

A. Identify important trails

Before state lands are leased or conveyed, DNR will identify trails that merit retention in public ownership. The Division of Land will identify trails in consultation with the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (DPOR), other appropriate divisions of DNR, DOT/PF, DFG, affected private land owners, and local governments. Any agency, organization, or individual may identify public trails to be considered for protection.

B. Protect trails and routes of regional or statewide significance

Trails of regional or statewide significance will be identified through revisions to this plan[24] or through subsequent management plans, and retained in state ownership. These trails will be recorded on the state's land record system and reserved through issuance of a trail easement.[24] Trails of regional or statewide significance generally have a history of public use and likelihood for increased use. Routes with potential for significant public use, based on high resource values, should also be identified and retained in state ownership.

C. Protect local trails

Local trails should be retained in public ownership if they serve as collector trails that connect to a public open space system or regional or statewide trail, or if they form an established transportation system for local residents. Local trails will be identified and protected through management plans or land conveyance design under guidelines recommended in DNR's subdivision design manual. Local trails will be recorded on the state's land record system and reserved through issuance of a trail easement.

D. Trail buffer widths and activity areas

Trails of regional or statewide significance on state land will be protected by a publicly-owned buffer that has a minimum width of 100 feet (50 feet each side of center line). This buffer is intended to protect the quality of the experience of the user and to minimize negative effects from adjacent land uses. Buffer widths may be increased to minimize land use and ownership conflicts, to protect the privacy of adjacent landowners, to separate motorized from non-motorized uses, to allow future siting of public facilities, to allow flexibility for rerouting, or to adapt a trail to specific public uses or aesthetic or environmental concerns.

Buffer widths may vary along the length of a trail because of the above considerations. The width of a buffer on any portion of a trail should also be based on the management intent for adjacent public land as expressed through applicable land use plans. Trail buffers should be located and designed in consultation with appropriate divisions of DNR, DFG, and DOT/PF, local governments, affected private land owners, and appropriate user groups. Activity areas of 10 to 40 acres may be identified along trails for other uses such as camping or rest areas.

E. Land use in publicly-owned buffers

To maintain the aesthetic character, trail buffers will be managed to maintain the natural vegetation within the buffer. Other activities must not diminish the quality of the recreation experience and the aesthetic character of the trail buffer, to the extent feasible and prudent. This guideline does not preclude trail crossings or rerouting as described below. Trails may be cleared to allow for the appropriate recreation experience.

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24 Under this guideline, DNR will consider recording the trail to be developed by the university west of the Duktoth River.

F. Rerouting trails

Trails may be rerouted to minimize land use conflicts or to facilitate use of a trail if alternate routes provide opportunities similar to the original. If trails are rerouted, DNR should require construction of new trail segments if warranted by type of use. Rerouting trails should be done in consultation with DPOR and other affected divisions of DNR, DOT/PF, DFG, local governments, private landowners, and appropriate user groups. If a development project necessitates rerouting a trail, the developer should bear the costs of rerouting.

G. Trail crossings

When it is necessary for powerlines, pipelines or roads to cross trail buffers, crossings should be at as close to a 90-degree angle to the buffer as feasible and prudent.