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December 9, 2014

Board of Supervisors
County of Ventura
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

SUBJECT: Review, Consideration and Adoption of the Santa Rosa Valley Trail Master Plan and Mitigated Negative Declaration. (Public Hearing)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended the Board of Supervisors take the following actions:

1. **CERTIFY** that your Board has reviewed and considered this staff report and all exhibits thereto, including the proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration (Exhibit 2), and has considered all comments received during the public comment process;
2. **FIND**, based on the whole of the record before the Board of Supervisors, including the Initial Study and any comments received, that upon implementation of the mitigation measures there is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment and that the MND reflects the Board's independent judgment and analysis;
3. **ADOPT** the MND (Exhibit 2);
4. **ADOPT** the Santa Rosa Valley Trail Master Plan (Exhibit 1);
5. **SPECIFY** the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors at 800 S. Victoria Avenue, Ventura, CA 93009 as the location and custodian of the documents and materials that constitute the record of proceedings upon which this decision is based; and



6. **DIRECT** the RMA Planning Division to incorporate the Santa Rosa Valley Trail Master Plan into the proposed scope of work for the upcoming County-initiated General Plan Update.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this item.

BACKGROUND:

On June 18, 2013 the Board of Supervisors authorized the Resource Management Agency Director to execute a Funding Agreement between the County of Ventura and Santa Rosa Valley Trails, Inc. (SRVTI), and a Professional Services Contract between the County of Ventura and Rincon Consultants, Inc. for the preparation of the Santa Rosa Valley Trail Plan. These agreements secured a consultant to prepare the Master Plan and SRVTI's full funding of that contract. In the fall of that year the project kicked-off and since that time numerous community meetings have been held through the Santa Rosa Valley Municipal Advisory Committee (Santa Rosa Valley MAC), and a Draft Trail Master Plan and Environmental Document have been prepared and circulated for public review. In addition to the Resource Management Agency, the effort involved the Public Works Agency Transportation Department and the General Services Agency Parks Department.

DISCUSSION:

As directed by the Board, a Santa Rosa Valley Trail Master Plan has been prepared and is presented to the Board today for consideration. The Trail Master Plan (Exhibit 1) includes an assessment of the current and proposed trail system conditions, design standards, a trail development plan, and operation and maintenance guidelines. The Trail Master Plan is not intended to serve as a trail development commitment and therefore does not include a funding program nor does it establish a construction schedule. This is an important concept and is well-described in the Trail Master Plan's Executive Summary:

"This Trail Master Plan incorporates the County's long-standing policy that new trails and facilities will not be developed unless funding for their proper construction and long-term maintenance has been identified. The trail system within the Santa Rosa Valley is unique in that a non-governmental entity, SRVTI, exists for the sole purpose of supporting, developing and maintaining trail facilities. Thus, while the County does not currently have the funding set aside for the development and maintenance of new trail facilities, the facilities outlined in this Trail Master Plan may potentially be realized under the auspices of SRVTI.

Regardless of the entity that may be responsible for the development and maintenance of trail segments, the Trail Master Plan is intended to ensure that future trails are developed and managed in a consistent manner and in keeping with established County design guidelines.”

The map in Figure 14 of the Trail Master Plan (Exhibit 1) illustrates the recommended trail system, which consists of both existing and proposed trail segments. The system includes a combination of off-street and on-street trail segments that can serve equestrians, pedestrians and bicyclists. The concept is to establish a trail system that, should it be constructed, would create an integrated and seamless network of trails throughout the Santa Rosa Valley.

The Design Standards and Guidelines included in the Trail Master Plan address issues such as trail widths and slopes, trail surface, appropriate drainage, fencing and signage. Again, the intent of the guidelines is to create a unified appearance and functionality among all trails in the valley. In addition, it is intended to ensure that all new trail facilities meet the design criteria of applicable federal, state and local standards.

The Trail Operation and Maintenance Guidelines within the Trail Master Plan outline issues such as trail surface and sign maintenance, trail sweeping and trash removal, landscape care and maintenance, irrigation, safety and emergency response. The Guidelines serve the important purpose of identifying the level of effort needed to ensure proper operation and maintenance, and the on-going commitment that will be required of the immediate community to ensure the trail system remains clean and safe.

In association with the Trail Master Plan, an Initial Study was prepared in accordance with the County’s Initial Study Assessment Guidelines. Based on the information contained in the Initial Study, a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) was prepared and made available for public review and comment from August 15, 2014 through September 15, 2014. Public notice was provided through a published public notice in the newspaper, the mailing of postcards to all property owners adjacent to proposed new trail segments, and e-mail notice through the Santa Rosa Valley MAC. In addition, the Resource Management Agency established a web page where the draft reports and the Draft Trail Plan and Draft Environmental Document were posted. The web page also provided an easy method for submitting comments and questions throughout the Trail Master Plan preparation process, and was routinely updated to provide the public information on the status of the project.

A MND is a written statement briefly describing the reasons that a proposed project will not have a significant effect on the environment and therefore does not require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report. However, the Initial Study identified five (5) potentially significant effects on the environment, but measures that would avoid the effects or mitigate the effects to a point where no significant effect on the environment would occur were identified and agreed to before the MND was released for public

review. More specifically, the MND identified mitigation measures related to the following areas:

Air Quality: Prior to any trail construction requiring grading a Dust Control Plan shall be prepared and standard emission control measures will be implemented.

Biological Resources: Prior to any trail construction, appropriate biological screenings, species and plant surveys, and other reviews will be completed and sensitive areas will be avoided or replaced/restored at a 2:1 ratio. Any needed fencing will not restrict wildlife movement.

Agriculture: Proposed trail improvements within 300 feet of lands in agricultural production shall not be constructed until such lands are no longer used for agricultural purposes.

Cultural Resources: Prior to completion of final design for any trail improvement that will involve grading activities, the implementing entity shall contract with a County-approved archaeologist to perform a cultural resources records search.

Hazards: Any staging areas that might be built shall be set back 500 feet from mapped fault traces, wherever feasible. If located within potential landslide hazard zones, then an evaluation of the adjacent hillside shall be performed by a registered engineering geologist, civil or geotechnical engineer.

Because the adoption of the Trail Master Plan does not commit or authorize the County or SRVTI to begin constructing trail segments, the mitigation measures identified in the MND are directed at the subsequent construction projects, which will on their own be subject to project-specific environmental review, unless determined to be exempt under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

During the public review period for the Draft Trail Master Plan and companion MND, no public comments were received. It is therefore recommended that the Board of Supervisors review and adopt the Trail Master Plan and MND following your public hearing. At the time the Board directed the preparation of the Trail Master Plan, it was understood that following adoption of the Plan there would be additional work required to fully incorporate the Trail Master Plan into the County's General Plan. Board direction at that time was to utilize up to \$30,000 in GSA Park funding to complete that work. However, at this time the RMA Planning Division is beginning preliminary work on a General Plan Update scope of work to be brought forward for Board consideration. Given this activity, it is further recommended that the Board direct the RMA Planning Division to incorporate the Santa Rosa Valley Trail Master Plan into the proposed scope of work for the upcoming County-initiated General Plan Update. Alternatively, should the Board direct that this work be done in advance of the General Plan, it would be necessary to allocate the \$30,000 in GSA Parks funding to the project.

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This letter has been reviewed by the County Executive Office, County Counsel, the General Services Agency, the Public Works Agency, and the Auditor-Controller's Office.

If you have any questions, please contact Chris Stephens, Resource Management Agency Director, at 654-2661.



CHRIS STEPHENS
Resource Management Agency Director

ATTACHMENTS:

Exhibit 1 – Santa Rosa Valley Trail Master Plan
Exhibit 2 – Mitigated Negative Declaration