

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS FOR [AMERICAN TRAILS](#) WEBINAR:

### *Feasibility Study Ohlone-Portola Heritage Trail*

*September 15, 2021*

**Bill Bancroft asks:** For the automobile trail, what does Caltrans or highway departments offer to construct besides signage?

**Sam answered:** Nothing. A project to place signs in the CalTrans ROW would require local government funds. A Coastal Development Permit from the County or City (i.e., Half Moon Bay or Pacifica) and Encroachment Permit from CalTrans.

**Caterina LaRocca asks:** Are there national efforts to increase indigenous representation at higher levels within interpretation? At a site in AK we did not have permission to share indigenous stories, as it was not our right. In my opinion, respecting culture and land comes first, but how do you recommend teaching visitors about that when so much of the history isn't my right to share?

**Sam answered:** That is a dialogue to have with the local tribe, and perhaps the statewide Native American Commission. I found directly engaging with the local tribe the best way for them to tell their story.

**Movements to return geographical features to their original indigenous names? I.e. Denali instead of Mt McKinley?**

**Sam answered:** Who was here first, and does the colonist have the right to rename landforms independent of dialogue with local tribes? This is a dialogue worth having.

**Diana Wilson asks:** Were any non-profit groups involve?

**Sam answered:** Yes. The San Mateo County Historical Association (<https://historysmc.org/>) and other City Historical Associations were all nonprofits. The Association of Ramaytush Ohlone were a non-profit: <https://www.ramaytush.org/donate.html>. Los Californians were a non-profit: <https://loscalifornianos.org/>. The San Mateo County Park Foundation was a non-profit: <https://supportparks.org/>. Peninsula Open Space Trust (<https://openspacetrust.org/>) and the Coast side Land Trust (<https://www.coastsidelandtrust.org/>) were also nonprofits.

**Was information on native plants incorporated in the project?**

**Sam answered:** The Sanchez Adobe Interpretive Center includes a recommendation for a Landscape Plan that includes plants that represent the three early periods of California history (Native American, Spanish and Mexican): <https://parks.smcgov.org/sites/parks.smcgov.org/files/documents/files/Sanchez%20Adobe%20Master%20Plan.pdf>

Native planting and explanations could be incorporated at any site with interpretive signage.

**Deveron Shudic asks:** I'm listening as working, so I apologize if I missed this - my question is, will this trail eventually run through to Baja, CA or to any other point south or north?

**Sam answered:** We tried to develop a model trail in San Mateo County interpreting the Native American and Spanish first encounter. Because the Gaspar de Portol'a expedition took place from Baja north it

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has the potential to be interpreted in each of the coastal counties leading to San Mateo County. Many counties may focus on the Gaspar de Portolá expedition and miss the Native American perspective altogether. This is an opportunity to acknowledge Native American lands, and tell a two part story of the first encounter between two peoples, which was friendly.

**Erin Rieser asks:** How are you using modern technology, such as self-guided tours through a cellphone, to provide additional historical teaching throughout the trail?

**Sam answered:** We would like to be doing this, but another phase of implementation of the project.

**Jeffrey Morales asks:** I am curious if all of the trail segments are ADA compliant? Not that they have to be, but I am curious.

**Sam answered:** Not all but there has been every effort to accommodate where possible on each trail segment where feasible: [https://parks.smcgov.org/sites/parks.smcgov.org/files/OPHT-FINAL%20REPORT%204-30-19\\_r%20full.pdf](https://parks.smcgov.org/sites/parks.smcgov.org/files/OPHT-FINAL%20REPORT%204-30-19_r%20full.pdf). Consultations regarding what was feasible took place with the public agency/property owner.

**John Blythe Bailey asks:** Were there any economic impact studies done for the trail system? If so, what is the expected economic impact?

**Sam answered:** No, but good suggestion as the trail is developed there are many economic opportunities for tourism.

**On the parts of the trail that are geared towards pedestrians or bicyclists, is there any sense for the amount of users that are using the existing built part of the trail or any projections for the future usage when the full trail is complete?**

**Sam answered:** Remote visitor counters take place by each agency that is monitoring. The total results have not been tabulated.

**John Swintosky asks:** How will maintenance of this heritage trail be sustained?

**Sam answered:** Each agency that is responsible for that piece of the 90 mile long puzzle that they will be responsible for their segments planning, design, operations, and maintenance.

**Kevin Shanley asks:** All told, what did the Feasibility Study cost?

**Sam answered:** The total cost of the feasibility study was about \$100,000. And we had 50,000 more and we use that for communications plan, we used it for these two documentary films. Part of it also went towards the model interpretive signs for several locations. And also for development and brochures. Our County Park foundation helped us fund for \$10,000 to develop the logo. That was again a collaborative effort to make that logo. -- That would help his friend this trail. About hundred thousand dollars to do this feasibility study. So much of it was a collaborative effort of sharing by everyone that made this process for ability to do it.

**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS FOR [AMERICAN TRAILS](#) WEBINAR:**

***Feasibility Study Ohlone-Portola Heritage Trail***

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**Is there a summary of the number of volunteer hours invested in the creation of the plan?**

**Sam answered:** No, but 5 years of efforts and multiple committees involved. There as great passion about the effort and telling this fascinating story of first encounter.

**LaTonia Valentine asks:** What are some of the first steps that someone should take to start the process of creating/building trails? I know that research is key.

**Sam answered:** I believe American Trails have many webinars available to watch that could answer that question.

**Laura Baird asks:** Do you hold regular stakeholder meetings? There seem to be a lot of moving parts.

**Sam answered:** The Feasibility Study, and other deliverables were produced. The events of the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary and acknowledgement of the 100,000 years of Ohlone history took place in November 2019. There are not ongoing meetings taking place at this time, but the project trail segments do get discussed monthly as they are being implemented by the Peninsula Working Group on Regional Trails, that is made up of regional Federal, State, County and Special District, and Land Trusts to complete the regional trail network. That Working Group promotes communication, collaboration, and partnership between agencies.

**Lindsay Slautterback asks:** Was there any community engagement associated with this feasibility study?

**Sam answered:** Yes, extensive public engagement as detailed in the Feasibility Study: [https://parks.smcgov.org/sites/parks.smcgov.org/files/OPHT-FINAL%20REPORT%204-30-19\\_r%20full.pdf](https://parks.smcgov.org/sites/parks.smcgov.org/files/OPHT-FINAL%20REPORT%204-30-19_r%20full.pdf). Also see the power point prepared for the Board of Supervisors: <https://parks.smcgov.org/sites/parks.smcgov.org/files/OPHT-BOS-Presentation-62519.pdf>

**Madeline Smit asks:** Sorry if I missed this, but for the 90 miles length, what percentages would be accessible to bikes, equestrians, or only hikers?

**Sam answered:** All of it. Designed to be multi-use and in some cases for bicyclists braided on public road or highway ROW.

**Mark Steyer asks:** What were the funding sources?

**Sam answered:** The County Supervisors -- there's a funding measure that was passed by the voters about 10 years ago called Measure A, which helped increase the funding for San Mateo County Parks significantly. It was extended for a longer duration to address affordable housing and other County priorities, and it is now referred to as Measure K. Every County Supervisor was able to have a portion of that Measure K funding allocated to them to spend however they wished. Two County Supervisors who I mentioned Don Horsley and Carole Groom who championed this project each gave 75,000 from their discretionary pots. We've gotten other funding from the County Board of Supervisors for some of these interpretive signs. At our newest County Park Tunitas Creek Beach we are developing a Concept Plan for future improvements including the trail: <https://parks.smcgov.org/tunitas-creek-beach>. We have taken on new sections of trail, even since then, one called the Cowell Purisima Coastal Trail, which we are

**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS FOR [AMERICAN TRAILS](#) WEBINAR:**

***Feasibility Study Ohlone-Portola Heritage Trail***

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managing for the Peninsula Open Space Trust although we don't currently own:

<https://parks.smcgov.org/cowell-purisima-trail>

The Parks Department has also been a strong supporter of Priority Conservation Areas, which also addressed regional trails, and made recommendations to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors that were forwarded to the Association of Bay Area Governments on May 19, 2015

(<https://sanmateocounty.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3327467&GUID=7F8946F0-B954-414C-AFCB-7D71B42224AF&Options=&Search=>). We understand that regional trails and Priority Conservation Areas are now being incorporated into the Association of Bay Area Governments/Metropolitan Transportation Commission's Plan Bay Area 2050, which will prioritize future regional trail funding, and coordination.

**Matt Lassen asks:** Was the funding to initiate this project local? What piece of the planning puzzle has resulted in attaining the most future funding?

**Sam answered:** The crowning supervisors -- there's a funny measure that was passed by the voters about 10 years ago called Caskey measure A. It helped increase the funding for County Parks. It was extended to address affordable housing and other County priorities. It is now referred to as measure K. Every County supervisor was able to have a portion of that funding allocated to them to spend however they wished. To the County supervisors who I mentioned has championed this project who were Carol Groome who each does a 75,002 their pots. We've gotten other findings from the County Board of supervisor. For some of these interpretive signs. For future, we are developing the beach and developing the concept plan for that. We have taken on new sections of trail, even since then, one called the Cal Prisma. Which we are managing. We don't currently own. We are managing that for Peninsula open space trust. There's interpretive opportunities, future funding will flow. In terms of trail development, there's a right of funding sources, completion of the coastal trail was identified as a priority conservation area for the Association of the Bay area governments. So there's different champions for funding. We are working with all those important agencies. As well as our partners are on security funding for various segments.

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**Maureen Downing-Kunz asks:** I find it frustrating and offensive to have a monument for the "SF Bay Discovery Site" considering the Bay was long known to the Native Americans. Can we please rename this monument?

**Sam answered:** Please see how Golden Gate National Recreation Area currently interprets this site, which has changed considerably over time: <https://www.nps.gov/goga/learn/historyculture/san-francisco-bay-discovery-site.htm>

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**Michael Williams asks:** What are some of the issues that you may not been able to be as successful as you would have liked with the tribal consultation? What "gaps" are there that could be closed still??

**Sam answered:** We started a dialogue with the Amah Mutsun tribe whose territory is south of San Mateo County to San Luis Obispo. They did not want to talk about the significance of Gaspar de Portola at all. They were very upset about the "discovery" story from that perspective without talking about the Native Americans who were here first. The Muwekma Ohlone also shared very similar stories as the Amah Mutsun and the devastating impact of the Missions of California on Native Americans, but also said San Mateo County was not their territory. They introduced to the descendants of the Ramaytush Ohlone. Jonathan Cordero, who is the Chair of the Association of the Ramaytush Ohlone is also a PhD Sociology professor at a college in Southern California, and he was a pleasure to work with. He participated in the drafting of the Historical Significance of this trail project, and the importance of telling two people's stories equally weighted. With Mitch Postel President of the San Mateo County Historical Association, we prepared a 20 page document and 10 pages of it was describing the Ramaytush Ohlone and their culture. It is an appendix to the Feasibility Study, but is also available as a standalone document:

[https://parks.smcgov.org/sites/parks.smcgov.org/files/Statement%20of%20Historical%20Significance%204919%20002\\_0.pdf](https://parks.smcgov.org/sites/parks.smcgov.org/files/Statement%20of%20Historical%20Significance%204919%20002_0.pdf)

When equally weighted interpretive signs were created Mr. Cordero helped us develop the content for that sign about the Ohlone. We made sure to pay him for his time spent on his services. We had a great partnership going and continue to have. Before this trail study, the Ramaytush Ohlone story was not well known in San Mateo County. Their population had been so significantly reduced over time a lot of people did not know there were still living descendants of the Raymaytush Ohlone. The development of this trail project was really a catalyst for this tribe to come out and share their story with everybody else, and it was so welcomed by the community. It was really a beautiful effort to participate in. There are more interpretive signs to be developed at many locations.

**Myles Sornborger asks:** Great presentation, thank you! What kind of maintenance is expected to be needed, and how will that be organized in the newly built sections?

**Sam answered:** Each agency will be responsible for the trail segment that is their piece of the larger 90 mile long puzzle. Getting all the agencies on board with the same vision was the challenge but they all embraced the project.

**Sandra Schmid asks:** What is a watershed?

**Taylor answered:** It's a land area that channels rainfall and snowmelt to creeks, streams, and rivers, and eventually to outflow points such as reservoirs, bays, and the ocean.

**Sam answered:** The tribal villages lived in a watershed. During different times of the year, they moved up and down the watershed for shelter, food, and sanitation reasons. The tribal trade route from village to village tied the tribal villages together. It was this tribal trade route that the Gaspar de Portol'a expedition took to get to from the southern San Mateo County line on the coast side to Palo Alto on the bayside.

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS FOR [AMERICAN TRAILS](#) WEBINAR:

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**Do you partner with Sierra Club or Nature Conservancy or Audubon? Do they help with historic trails?**

**Sam answered:** The Committee for Green Foothills (<https://www.greenfoothills.org/>), who are a non-profit that advocates for environmental protection, were actively involved and supportive of the project. The Sierra Club, Nature Conservancy and Audubon did not participate in the trail planning process; however, it may be that these other environmental groups become more involved when the design of sections of trail are done by each agency, and CEQA is initiated for permitting.

**Sarah Smith asks:** What types of educational/interpretive materials or guides do you have for this trail for visitors to learn about the history and relevance of it? Any annual or special events to draw in and engage visitors?

**Sam answered:** There interpretive signs at the Bluffs, Sanchez Adobe, and the Pacifica. We have brochures. We are developing more interpretive signs. If you go to look at any of these webinar resources there is a tremendous amount of information that is available via social media, documentary films. Doug McConnell is active in California on an open space issues and took a real interest in this project. Bay Area Backroads made a film about this project as well. We hiked the site with him and with the Raymaytush Ohlone Vice Chair Greg Castro.

Each of these participating park and open space agencies have embraced the story as well. So, there's a lot of resources here that are linked and have been shared by American Trails. I would encourage you to take a look at them. The San Mateo County Historic Association has a museum in Redwood City. There is a lot of information there. Sanchez Adobe we have a new interpretive center where we are now able to interpret fully these three early periods of California history.

**Stephen Svete asks:** Any traction on expanding the OP Trail to other counties?

**Sam answered:** There is discussion in Santa Cruz, but the Amah Mutsun do not want to discuss the Gaspar de Portol'a expedition. It may be that the Coastal Trail and the Native Americans stories are best told in other Counties. There are Counties like San Diego and Monterey who do tell the stories of the Gaspar de Portol'a Expedition, but may not detail the Native American story or first encounter of these two peoples.

**Do you recognize your shift to acknowledging Ohlone people in this story to be part of a larger international cultural shift to acknowledge native people everywhere?**

**Sam answered:** It was during the development of this Feasibility Study and films that the California Truth and Reconciliation effort with the California Native Americans was initiated:

<https://www.gov.ca.gov/2019/06/18/governor-newsom-issues-apology-to-native-americans-for-states-historical-wrongdoings-establishes-truth-and-healing-council/>. It gives me hope that there has been acknowledgement of past wrongs and that Native American people have the right to exist, tell their histories, and thrive. We can only hope that one day historically unrecognized tribes and their territories will be recognized by Federal and State governments.

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***Feasibility Study Ohlone-Portola Heritage Trail***

***September 15, 2021***

**Victoria Ip asks:** Has there been any training sessions for the various committees on cultural sensitivity (interpretive skills, ranger skills etc) for those working together with the native cultures to "accurately portray" the Ohlone perspective, especially as outsiders?

**Sam answered:** San Mateo County Parks has an Interpretive Specialist who works with our Park staff and developed a presentation which featured State Park Archaeologist/Anthropologist Mark Hylkema. They did a special training interpretive training for San Mateo County Park Rangers.

I have observed that every participating organization wanted to make sure the interpretive story gets accurately told within their own organization. There has been a lot of communication between the tribe and some of these organizations. There's really a lot of sharing that's happening in a very open way.

San Mateo County Parks Sanchez Adobe always held a Spanish Day and people would dress up in Spanish clothes, do dances, and make tortillas, candles, and basket weaving. They would discuss what Spanish life was like at that time. We never ever had an Ohlone day, and the site was a former village site that was made into an Assistencia Mission that provided food and water for the San Francisco Mission. We opened the new interpretive center in 2019 and we had for the first time an Ohlone day. Ramaytush Ohlone tribal representatives talked about their way of life and their baskets and how they lived. Johnathan Cordero came, and gave a presentation on whether California Missions should be reinterpreted to clarify whether they were a positive influence on the Native Americans of California or not. He gave a very eye-opening presentation to the community that documented that the Missions in no way benefitted the Native Americans of California.

Johnathan is currently working with UC Hastings College of Law on a class about the underlining ideologies and structures of focus on Indian laws as it relates to land/property. Special emphasis will be placed on unrecognized tribes of California. There's a lot of dialogue happening beyond this trail project. Most of the tribes of California were never recognized by the Federal State or local governments. Through California Truth and Reconciliation Commission and dialogue with California's tribes there is an opportunity to reinterpret what we know of the past.