



**COUNTY OF SAN MATEO**  
Inter-Departmental Correspondence  
Parks



**Date:** July 1, 2015  
**Board Meeting Date:** August 4, 2015  
**Special Notice / Hearing:** None  
**Vote Required:** Majority

**To:** Honorable Board of Supervisors

**From:** Marlene Finley, Parks Director

**Subject:** Committee to Support Designation of the Portola Trail as a National Historic Trail and Promote Completion of the California Coastal Trail through San Mateo County

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Resolution authorizing formation of a Portola Trail Committee to support designation of the Portola Trail as a National Historic Trail and promote completion of the California Coastal Trail through San Mateo County.

**BACKGROUND:**

On November 4, 1769 the Portola Expedition from Spain travelled from Baja Mexico through San Diego and up the California coast. Based on diaries their route is known to have covered approximately 50 miles along coastal Santa Cruz and San Mateo Counties (they had six camps in San Mateo County), before arriving at Sweeney Ridge to view the San Francisco Bay. This event eventually led to colonization of the San Francisco Bay Area due to the strategic and commercial importance of the Golden Gate. November 4, 2019 will be the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this important expedition. There is growing interest in formally designating the Portola Trail as a National Historic Trail managed by the National Parks similar to the Appalachian Trail, Pacific Crest Trail, Juan Bautista de Anza Trail, and others. The trail through San Mateo County would go through three current National Parks (Milagra Ridge, Mori Point, and Sweeney Ridge). There is also a direct tie to the Sanchez Adobe which was the former location of the Ohlone village of Pruristac, which the expedition was known to have contacted before they went to Sweeney Ridge.

The Sanchez Adobe Master Plan was adopted in 2007 and identified \$7,000,000 in improvements including conservation of the Adobe house, creation of a visitors center, rearrangement of the parking lot, relocation of the park ranger residence, re-creation of the Pruristac village site, uncovering a portion of the Mission outpost, landscape

screening and San Pedro Creek restoration (Steelhead trout bearing stream). County Parks included \$500,000 in the 2015-17 budget to be used for some conservation work of the Adobe and moving the ranger residence. The Historical Association is committed to raising \$200,000 for interior improvements and restoration of the Adobe. National Parks could be a partner in the interpretation of Portola's discovery.

### **DISCUSSION:**

On April 23, 2015, Congresswoman Jackie Speier met with Parks Director Finley, Mitch Postel, President of the San Mateo County Historical Association, and National Parks staff about the process for the Portola Trail being formally designated a National Historic Trail. Congressional support of the California delegation is needed to: 1) secure funding for National Parks to develop a feasibility report to verify the exact trail alignment (last comprehensively mapped in 1928), 2) encourage other California Counties to define their narrative of when the expedition travelled through their communities, and 3) demonstrate the historic significance of this trail. If successful, the feasibility report would facilitate National Historic Trail designation by Congress.

There is an opportunity to commemorate the expedition with a National Historic Trail designation at the county and state level in California, and federal level.

The Portola Trail through San Mateo County is known to overlap with half of the California Coastal Trail alignment. The Portola Trail could be marked using 22 miles of the California Coastal Trail, 11.5 miles of existing trails or sidewalks, 9 miles of trails through lands of Peninsula Regional Open Space District and Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, 4.5 miles through State Parks and Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and 3 miles would need to be discussed with private property owners. The six known camps in San Mateo County could become backcountry camping destinations (i.e. hut to hut). Wayfaring signs could be placed to mark the expedition's route on the ground prior to the Portola Trail's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

There is a need for the County of San Mateo to champion this effort in order to build a coalition of support with other California counties, state and local agencies, and the Congressional delegation. At the June 4, 2015 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting, the Commission recommended that the Board of Supervisors set up a Portola Trail Committee of key representatives from various agencies and organizations in San Mateo County to initiate efforts. Below is a list of recommended representatives to participate:

- County Supervisors
- County Parks and Recreation Commissioners
- County Parks
- Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
- California State Parks
- Peninsula Open Space Trust
- Golden Gate National Recreation Area
- California Coastal Commission
- California Coastal Conservancy

- CalTrans
- Amah Mutsun Land Trust
- Muwekma Ohlone Tribe
- Agricultural Advisory Committee
- Half Moon Bay Parks Department
- Pacifica Parks Department
- Pescadero Municipal Advisory Council
- Midcoast Community Council
- San Mateo County Historical Association
- San Francisco Water Department
- Paul Reimer
- Bureau of Land Management
- California Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein
- Congresswomen Jackie Speier, Anna Eshoo, Nancy Pelosi, and Congressman Sam Farr
- Senator Jerry Hill
- Assemblymen Rich Gordon and Kevin Mullen

Paul Reimer, a former board member of Peninsula Open Space Trust, has done extensive research on the Portola Trail based on diaries, and its exact alignment through San Mateo County. See the [recent article](#) he wrote about the Portola Trail for the San Mateo County Historical Association magazine La Peninsula.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

There will be no direct fiscal impact to the General Fund. The Portola Trail Committee will be staffed by County Parks.