



Coastal Access Program: the California Coastal Trail

What is the California Coastal Trail?

The vision for the California Coastal Trail (CCT) is a continuous interconnected public trail system along the California coastline. It is designed to foster appreciation and stewardship of the scenic and natural resources of the coast and serves to implement aspects of Coastal Act policies promoting non-motorized transportation. The Trail system is to be located on a variety of terrains, including the beach, bluff top, hillsides providing scenic vantage points, and within the highway right-of-way. It may take many forms, including informal footpaths, paved sidewalks, and separated bicycle paths. When no other alternative exists, it sometimes connects along the shoulder of the road. While primarily for pedestrians, the Trail also accommodates a variety of additional user groups, such as bicyclists, wheelchair users, equestrians, and others as opportunities allow. The CCT consists of one or more parallel alignments. It is intended that the CCT system shall be designed and implemented to achieve the following goals and objectives:

- Provide a continuous walking and hiking trail as close to the ocean as possible;
- Provide maximum access for a variety of non-motorized uses by utilizing parallel trail segments where feasible;
- Maximize connections to existing and proposed local trail systems;
- Ensure that the trail has connections to trailheads, parking areas, transit stops, inland trail segments, etc. at reasonable intervals;
- Maximize ocean views and scenic coastal vistas; and,
- Provide an educational experience where feasible through interpretive programs, kiosks, and other facilities.

The trail is recognized both statewide and nationally. California Governor Gray Davis and the White House Millennium Council officially recognized the trail in 1999 and it is now designated as California's Millennium Legacy Trail. The California Legislature has

recognized it as a priority statewide trail system and required a status report: *Completing the California Coastal Trail* prepared in 2003.

Does the California Coastal Trail exist today?

Yes and no, it is a work in progress. Of the 1270 miles of coastline, there are about 875 miles of CCT completed.

Where can I find a segment of the California Coastal Trail today?

There are several hundred signs which have been installed to mark many of the completed segments. To find these trails, take a walk in your favorite coastal park and look for this logo:



You can also check out the California Coastal Commission's guidebook series, *Experience the California Coast*, which contains maps depicting the currently available coastal trail segments:

- A Guide to Beaches and Parks in Northern California
- Beaches and Parks From San Francisco to Monterey
- Beaches and Parks From Monterey to Ventura
- Beaches and Parks in Southern California

Additionally, the State Coastal Conservancy has CCT resources located here: <https://scc.ca.gov>.

Public & Private Partnerships

The CCT is located on lands owned by both public agencies and private landowners. As future segments will also utilize both public and private lands, a comprehensive approach for planning, implementation and operation of the CCT has been developed. This public/private partnership is headed by the State Coastal Conservancy, in consultation with the California Coastal Commission, the California Department of Parks and Recreation, and Caltrans, along with many other partners including Federal agencies (e.g. National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and

Wildlife Service, U. S. military bases), State agencies (e.g. Wildlife Conservation Board), all local governments and special districts as well as various nonprofit and voluntary private landowners.

Coastal Commission's Role

The Coastal Commission is a state agency responsible for statewide coastal planning and regulation, operating under the Coastal Act of 1976. An important part of this responsibility is the Coastal Commission's role as the lead agency for planning and permitting along the entire coastline. A primary objective for the Commission is to ensure the selection of a continuous and coordinated trail alignment, which respects and protects natural resources in a manner consistent with the Coastal Act.

State Coastal Conservancy's Role

The State Coastal Conservancy is a state agency created to assist in the implementation of the goals of the Coastal Act. In addition to the many resource protection and enhancement programs the Conservancy supports, maximizing recreational opportunities such as the CCT is one of the agency's highest priorities. The Conservancy provides funding to public agencies and private nonprofit organizations to acquire land and construct new segments of the CCT.

In 2007, the Conservancy was designated as the lead State agency for CCT planning, in consultation with the Coastal Commission, Department of Parks and Recreation and Caltrans. (PRC 31408).

Environmental Justice

Environmental Justice is defined as: "the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and polices". (Government Code Section 65040.12(e)(1)). At a very basic level, the CCT forms part of the mandate to provide public access to and along the coast.

Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction

Completion of the CCT will help to implement State mandates to meet climate change greenhouse gas reduction goals associated with vehicle miles traveled. Ensuring that development projects incorporate CCT segments (as feasible) supports the vision of a more equitable transportation system that includes alternative modes of transportation that do not contribute to greenhouse gases.

Siting & Design Standards

The trail should be sited and designed to be located along or as close to the shoreline as is physically and aesthetically feasible. Where it is not feasible to locate the trail along the shoreline due to natural landforms or legally authorized development that prevents passage at all times, inland bypass trail segments located as close to the shoreline as possible should be utilized. Shoreline trail segments that may not be passable at all times should be augmented by inland alternative routes. Special attention should be given to identifying any segments that may need to be incorporated into water-crossing structures such as bridge projects.

Where gaps are identified, interim segments should be employed to ensure continuity of the coastal trail. Interim segments should be noted as such, with provisions that as opportunities arise, the trail shall be realigned as close as possible to its optimum location. Interim trail segments should meet as many of the CCT objectives and standards as possible.

The CCT should be designed and located to minimize impacts to environmentally sensitive habitat areas and prime agriculture lands to the maximum extent feasible. Where appropriate, trail access should be limited to pass and repass. Where necessary to prevent disturbance to sensitive species, sections of the trail may be closed on a seasonal basis. Alternative trail segments shall be provided where feasible. For situations where impact avoidance is not feasible, appropriate mitigation measures should be identified, including but not limited to use of boardwalks, reducing width of trails, protective fencing and drainage measures along edges of agricultural land, etc.

The CCT should incorporate existing oceanfront trails and paths and support facilities of public shoreline parks and beaches to the maximum extent feasible. To maximize access to the CCT, adequate support facilities, such as parking areas and trailheads, should be provided.

The CCT should be designed to avoid being located on roads with motorized vehicle traffic where feasible. In locations where it is not possible to avoid siting the trail along a roadway, the trail should be located off of the pavement and within the public right-of-way, and separated from traffic by a safe distance or by physical barriers that do not obstruct, or detract from, the scenic views and visual character of their surroundings. In locations where the trail must cross a roadway, safe under- or over-crossings or other alternative at-grade crossings should be considered in connection with appropriate directional and traffic warning signage.

History

Policy makers and coastal managers have long planned for a continuous coastal trail in California:

The 1975 California Coastal Plan provided in Policy 145, that “a hiking, bicycle, and equestrian trails system be established along or near the coast” and that “ideally the trails system should be continuous and located near the shoreline.”

The California Coastal Trail was designated California’s Millennium Legacy Trail in 1999 by Governor Davis and the White House Millennium Trail Council encouraged federal agencies to assist in developing it.

State Legislation in 2001 focused efforts to complete the Coastal Trail. Assembly Concurrent Resolution 20 (Pavely) declared the Coastal Trail is an official State Trail and urged the Coastal Commission and the Coastal Conservancy to work collaboratively to complete it.

Senate Bill 908 (Chesboro) charged the Coastal Conservancy in 2001 to prepare a plan, in cooperation with the Coastal Commission and State Parks Department, describing how the Coastal Trail can be completed. This Plan was submitted in 2003 to the legislature and is entitled *Completing the California Coastal Trail*. It sets forth the goals and objectives of the CCT and includes a blueprint for how missing links can be connected.

Assembly Bill 1396 (Laird) in 2007 identified the Coastal Conservancy as the lead agency for CCT planning, in consultation with the Coastal Commission, State Parks and Caltrans. (PRC 31408).

The California Legislature adopted Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 153 proclaiming October 11, 2008 as California Coastal Trail Day.

For more information on the California Coastal Trail, contact the Coastal Commission’s Public Access Program Manager:

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