



Maple Canyon Enhancement Planning

Workshop 2, Field Visit, Notes

December 5, 2015, 9:00am to 12:00pm

Stakeholder Attendees

San Diego Canyonlands Staff and Interns

Eric Bowlby, Executive Director, Event Facilitator
Ariel – SDCL intern (hydro-modification issues in the canyons)
Jasmine – SDCL intern (hydro-modification issues in the canyons)

Maple Canyon Stakeholders

Ranger Jason Allen – Senior Park Ranger for urban canyons
Carolisa Morgan– Neighbor, Friend of Maple Canyon, had been unaware of Maple Canyon
Ben Baltic – Neighbor, Bankers Hill Community Group
Michael Jacobs– Neighbor, Friend of Maple Canyon
Roy McMakin– Neighbor, President of 'Friends of Maple Canyon'
John Lamb – Neighbor, Friend of Maple Canyon
Kurt Schmidt – Neighbor Friend of Maple Canyon
Sally Fall– Neighbor, Friend of Maple Canyon
Jeanne Rawlings– Neighbor, Friend of Maple Canyon
Paul Quinton – homeowner of 'Sentinel House'
Jim – neighbor (Does anyone know Jim's last name?)
Tom Mullaney – lives in Uptown
Virginia Wofford– Neighbor, Friend of Maple Canyon, uses canyon frequently
Gary Bonnen– neighbor
Ellen Moxham– Neighbor, Friend of Maple Canyon

This is the second stakeholder meeting and the first field visit. Goal was to review suggested trailheads on the west side of the canyon at the following locations:

1. Quince Street & 3rd Avenue
2. First Avenue Bridge
3. Curlew Street Cul-de-sac

1) Trailhead Discussion and Orientation

Signups occurred, Bowlby handed out "Important Contacts" list.

Self introductions.

Stakeholders' Statements, Concerns, Suggestions:

- "The amenities of Maple Canyon must be specified in order to differentiate the canyon (open space) from being categorized as a park." There is concern that Maple Canyon will be made into more of a park setting than an open space trail to make up for San Diego's deficiency of "active" park space. Stakeholder was concerned that 25 ft. wide paths were being proposed in Maple canyon, swing sets, grass, restrooms, and so forth to create an active park setting. Many stakeholders expressed a desire to maintain the canyon in a natural, open space state and not convert it into a "park".
 - It was clarified, the "deficiency" in park space being referred to is the General Plan standard of **2.88 acres of active park per 1000 people**.
 - **Bowlby:** Maple Canyon is not proposed to be re-defined as an "active park", it is an open space, resource-based park and is used for "passive recreation" (hiking, jogging, bike riding); City planners are however, using/seeking an equivalency formula with credit toward the General Plan park standard when they improve trails.
 - **Ranger Jason Allen:** Maple Canyon is categorized as an 'open space park' to specify its use as a recreational space.
 - **Bowlby** clarified that if landscaping improvements were made as part of a trail improvement, it would be with native plants, and the non-native plants along the trails would be removed.

2) Quince St./3rd Ave. Trail/Trailhead is not clearly labeled and needs improvement.



- Trailhead is not clearly labeled and needs improvement.
- Signage at key points like 1st Ave. was discussed but not decided.
- It is hard to get up and down the trail near the beginning of the trailhead. Several

stakeholders suggested hand railings, steps and/or more switchbacks to make the trail accessible to more people.

- Some stakeholders believed that new access to trails will encourage homeless encampments.
- A few stakeholders did not see the point of making a second trailhead because they believed Maple Canyon is not very large.
- **Ranger Jason Allen:** Despite stakeholder meetings, and what is agreed upon (ie to have a second trailhead at location X), there is still a planning and permit process that would have to be initiated. This process would take time and funding before a new trailhead or alignment could be built.
- **Ranger Jason Allen:** it is hard to maintain the trails and the canyon due to the shortage in grounds maintenance staff and park rangers.
- Proper trails should be made in order to reduce renegade paths, and to allow easy access for all age groups. Deterrent plants, railing and signs could reduce renegade paths and the consequences they may bring to the canyon, such as erosion.
- Homeowners/stakeholders whose properties lie near trails are concerned about liability. If someone were to hurt themselves near a homeowner's property, who is liable?
 - **Bowlby:** trails will not be built on private property, only on city-owned land or "Right of Ways" where the City has authority.
- One of the stakeholder's was told he would have to pay the city \$300 to have a tree pruning truck come to his property via the canyon road/trail.
 - **Ranger Jason** indicated that documents were received from a consultant and that this was under review.
- A resident, who has lived in the area for 30+ years, was concerned about fires starting as there have been 3 since he moved to the neighborhood.
 - A suggestion was made to limit access in Maple Canyon to daylight hours, to reduce the likelihood of illegal activities, encampments, etc..
 - Senior Ranger Jason and a few of the other stakeholders believe that it would be hard to enforce.
- Residents have seen what has happened to the Suspension Bridge on Spruce St., and how it has turned into a "a party place" at night, with youth and skateboarders becoming a nuisance, and throwing glass containers into the canyon.
 - Residents are adamant to prevent this from occurring at Maple Canyon.
- Mountain bikers ride through the canyon and neighborhood, at night, (often routinely on Weds. at 8:45PM) disturbing residents and often using/creating illegal trails. There seems to be fewer of them, but it still happens.
 - **Bowlby** shared that the SD Mountain Bike Association (SDMBA) (as well as several Maple

Canyon friends and the Rangers) reached out to the bikers and asked them to stay on the official trail and to quiet down. The SD MBA President, Kevin Loomis, was hoping to attend. He'll attend some other stakeholder meeting(s).

- Stakeholders concerned about the decrease in wildlife (coyotes, hawks, owls, squirrels, foxes, raccoons). People and wildlife may not be compatible, therefore more people would deter wildlife in the area even further.
 - **Bowlby:** the goal is to provide safe, convenient access in the canyon so that people do not create their own "social trails" or "renegade" trails that fragment the wildlife habitats.
 - SD Canyonlands is funded by the Coastal Conservancy to create a habitat restoration plan for Maple Canyon. He feels that the plan would be a great candidate for implementation using Prop. 1 funds and would benefit wildlife greatly.
 - A lot of work needs to be done to restore native plants in the canyon. About 70% of plants in the canyon are non-native/invasive. RECON Environmental has mapped the vegetation communities in Maple Canyon. (Map attached to these notes.)
 - Some of the invasive plants include – Jade, ice plant, Russian Thistle, Peruvian & Brazilian pepper trees and Palms; some of the native plants include – chollas cactus, lemonade berry, sage brush, laurel sumac, buckwheat, etc..

3) 1st Avenue Footbridge



- **This** is a potential trailhead, however, many stakeholders were concerned about this location as the well-lit bridge will allow easy access at night. This may result in more encampments and fires.
 - The trail entry point at Third & Quince is only 3-minutes away from the 1st Ave. Bridge. The Quince St. footbridge is also located on a busy road (4th Ave.) and leads directly to the trail on 3rd Ave.. Therefore, some stakeholders did not see the point of having another

trailhead at this location.

- A stakeholder suggested other ways to enjoy the canyon at this location without a trail, such as viewing points and informational signs/kiosks. The historic bridge provides views into the canyon and all the way to San Diego Bay and Pt. Loma, which is a well used public amenity.
 - There was a fear that a kiosk would be vandalized.
 - If a kiosk were to be built, flyers should not be distributed as this may cause litter. Instead of paper, QR codes with info accessible using smart phones could be an alternative. The kiosk could include historic information about the First Ave. Bridge. Additionally, information about the watershed and the canyon stream which runs into SD Bay could be included.
- It's a harsh transition from the nice antique-like railings of the bridge to the chain link fence on the 1st Avenue Footbridge along Palm.
 - **Suggestion: Replace chain link fence with same antique-like fence.**
 - **Close the gap at the end of the chain link** fence to prevent easy foot-traffic onto steep slopes creating renegade-trail erosion below the bridge.
 - **Street Division needs to trim the bougainvillea growing through this chain link fence** in order to offer better views into the canyon and encroachment into the sidewalk.

4) The stakeholders started down Palm St. toward the suggested Curlew St. trailhead.

- **Again, signage would be needed at this point**, people do not know where Maple Canyon is, or how to get there from 1st Avenue.
 - Some of the stakeholders liked the fact that there were no signs because it adds to the excitement of finding the canyon, and it reduces eye sore.
 - Too many signs may be unpleasant to look at, and will be subject to vandalism,
 - Alternatively, have an QR Code or other app telling people how to get to the canyon, or small directional signs.
- There is a nice, potential viewing spot of the canyon at Albatross St. & Olive St. Although it is a City Right of Way, people who live there have planted vegetation that could obstruct a clear view into the canyon.



- **Waldo Waterman Monument** Stakeholders stopped at a viewpoint to look across the canyon to Waldo Waterman Monument (Maple St. Park), where a trail is being suggested. It would need switchbacks, timber-box steps and/or stairs because it is a steep slope. This trail would be the first trailhead on the eastern side of Maple Canyon.
 - **Bowlby:** Almost all stakeholders agreed to the "Maple St. Park" location at the first stakeholder meeting but one stakeholder said "maybe".
 - How would potential consequences be evaluated including impact to pristine habitat which would need to be mitigated? Steep slopes would need to be made gentler and there would need to be adequate lighting.
 - The concern of criminal activity, such as encampments, dogs running free and attacking wildlife, is recurring.
 - There should be signs/graphics explaining why dogs need to be kept on leashes.
 - Offer a list of off-leash dog parks in San Diego.
 - While walking in the canyon, **Senior Ranger Jason Allen** said that the slopes below Waldo Waterman Monument (Maple St. Park) are too heavily eroded to have switchbacks there. However a new trail route is possible from the park.

- **Stakeholders arrive at Curlew cul-de-sac, suggested new trailhead**



- **Bowlby:** Curlew is a suggested trailhead because it is heavily used. Erosion from users is becoming severe. Regulatory signs would be put up in this area, if this were to be the place where a trailhead is agreed upon.
 - There is no space to park, therefore it cannot serve the greater region very well.
 - Have switchbacks down to the bottom trail for a gentle, sustainable trail.
 - Have boulders instead of benches at the top for resting or viewing but to prevent encampment, and hangouts, and to follow a more natural motif.
 - Use steps to traverse the slope only if necessary.
 - Some stakeholders suggested lighting at Curlew, however others thought it would encourage unwanted night activity.
- Sharon, a lady who was walking her dog, said that she comes to Maple Canyon 5 times a week, and she said she would use a trailhead at Curlew, should one be made.

5) Walking back to 3rd and Quince through the canyon.

- A stakeholder was concerned about emergency service access into the canyon, such as the paramedics if people were to get injured while inside the canyon. Community Police officers do not have keys to the locks to drive into the canyon.
 - **Ranger Jason Allen** said he thought the police had access, firefighters too, but said now they fight fires from the top of the canyon so as to not get stuck inside the canyon during a fire.
 - A stakeholder will provide the community police contact info.. Bowlby will contact them.

- Making a trail at Olive St. Park down into the canyon would require a footbridge to connect the trail on the east slope, to the main north/south access road on the west side of the creek. Incised creek bed is deep and slopes are eroding fast. It would be expensive and require engineering studies/design. It may be infeasible because it would be expensive to maintain too.
- **Bowlby/Ranger Jason discussed:** Potential to build a puncheon/footbridge in the canyon, parallel to the creek where Ranger Jason made a protective erosion barrier (close to Quince St. & 3rd Ave.). This bridge would not cross the stream but simply span the area where erosion makes the trail very narrow.
 - A stakeholder brought up a potential 5 year maintenance plan, which Bowlby suggested could be a part of the Canyon Enhancement Plan.



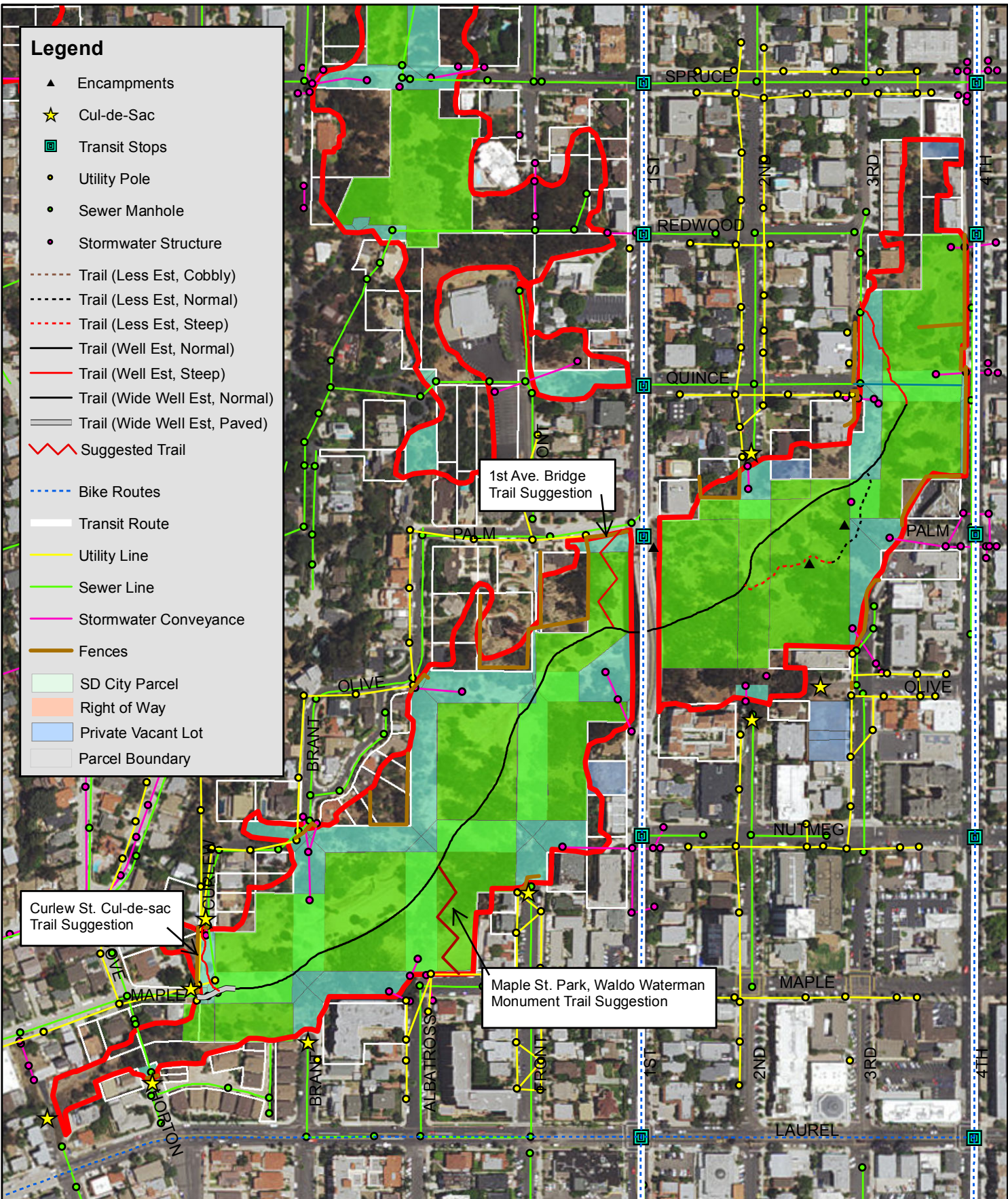
Senior Ranger Jason and crew have recently worked to reduce erosion of this pathway just south of the Quince Street bridge.

NEXT MAPLE CANYON ENHANCEMENT STAKEHOLDER MEETING - Field Trip #2

When: Saturday, January 30th, 2016 9:00am to Noon

Where: Meet at the Quince St. Bridge at the intersection of 3rd Ave. and Quince St. on the west side of the canyon, (same location as our first field trip).

What: We will hike the streets on the east side of the canyon to consider potential enhancements including viewpoints, signage, and a suggested trails at Olive St. Park and at Maple St. Park (near Waldo Waterman Monument) in the south.

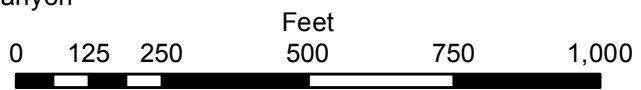


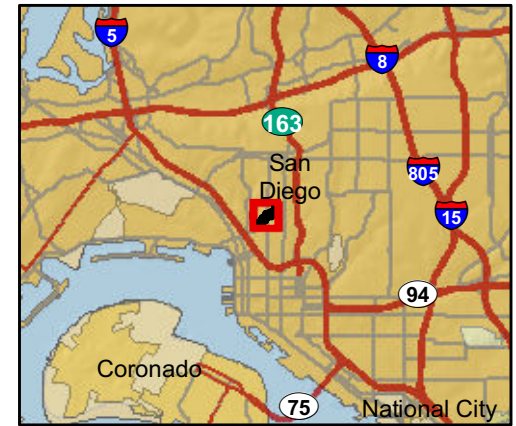
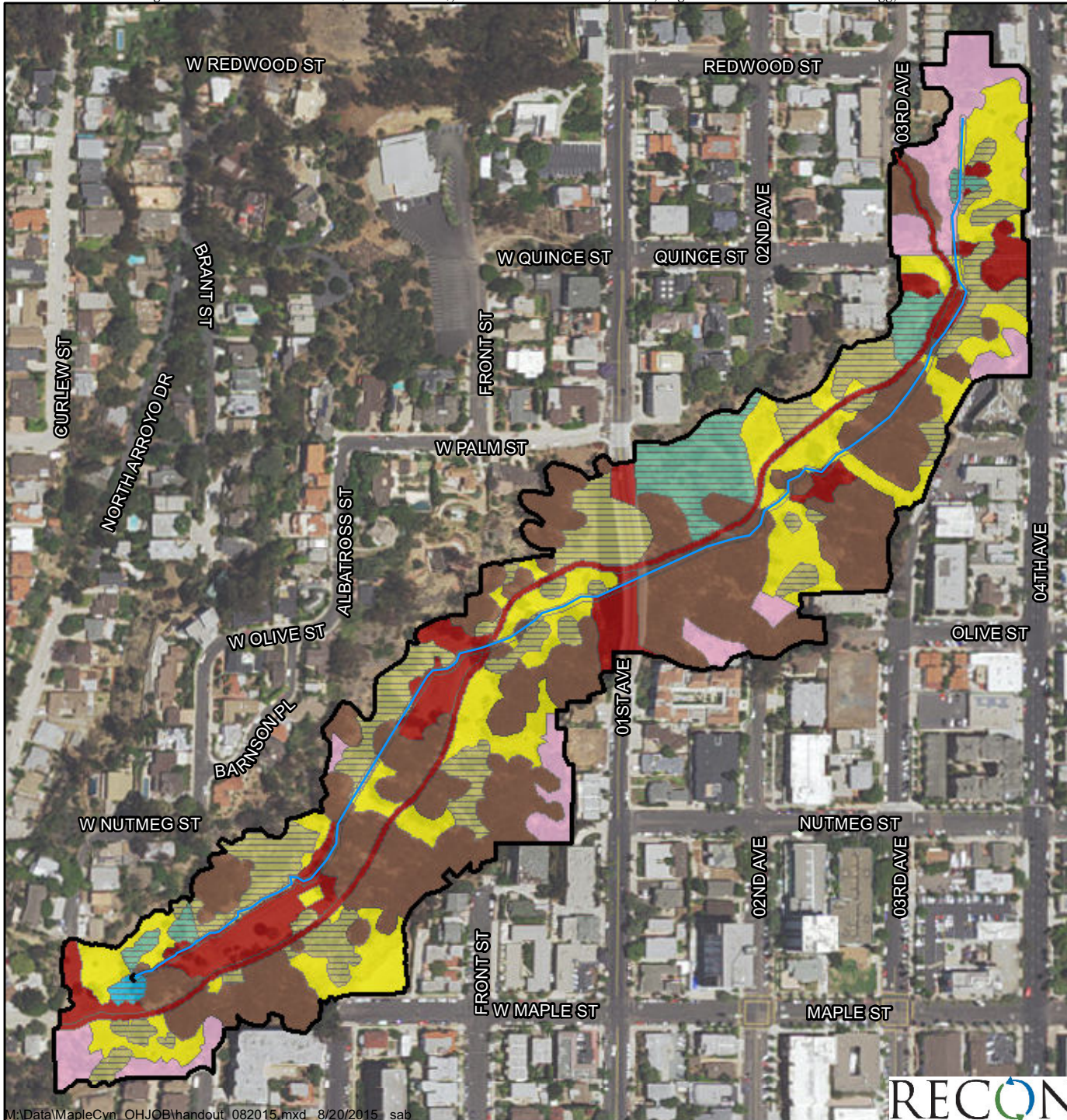
Maple Canyon | Socio-Infrastructural Conditions

Existing Conditions Map Set for Maple Canyon



Map Date: 10/28/2015 | Imagery Date: 2010
 Data Sources: SanGIS, San Diego Canyonlands
 Contact: Eric Bowlby | www.sdcanyonlands.org





Vegetation Classification Maple Canyon | San Diego, CA

— Maple Creek

Vegetation Type (Oberbauer 2008)

-  Disturbed Diegan Coastal Sage Scrub
-  Disturbed Maritime Succulent Scrub
-  Disturbed Wetland
-  Eucalyptus Woodland
-  Disturbed Habitat
-  Non-native Grassland
-  Non-native Vegetation

This map is for general reference only and is not intended for impact assessments or regulatory compliance. For additional information, contact RECON Environmental (619) 308-9333. Data collected April/May 2015



Maple Canyon Electronic Stakeholder Comments

Comments Regarding Proposed First Avenue Trail:

11/8/15: I live on the rim of the canyon, the entire side of my property borders the canyon. I usually don't respond to the updates, but something caught my eye in your last email and I wanted to give you another perspective on Maple Canyon.

You mentioned in your email, trailheads into the canyon and specifically a possible trailhead at the First Street bridge. I don't know if you are aware of the homeless situation in the canyon. In the past, neighbors have had to call the police to remove homeless people residing in the canyon--the main problems being potential, and actual, fires due to cooking or smoking in the canyon and safety if drug activity takes place in the canyon. While I have no problem with the homeless residing in the canyon, one has to accept that in an urban setting, I do have a problem with fires being used for cooking or warmth. And, I also would be concerned about safety if drug activity restarts in the canyon. I mention that not as a hypothetical situation but a reality. Several years back, the drug problem was such that the police routinely patrolled the canyon in an attempt to discourage that behavior from happening.

11/9/15: I understand that theoretically increased use should help to mitigate safety and fire concerns, but as a 30 year resident I know that initial enthusiasm wanes and when the public goes home the neighbors still have the problem. Perhaps choosing an entrance not on a main thoroughfare would help. School groups and joggers would not be deterred but those with no particular interest in the canyon would.

Those of us who view or visit the canyon have to realize that unlike many other canyons in our city, this one is not in an outlying suburban area but in the heart of the most congested urban, downtown portion of our city and access to the canyon is a double-edged sword. At one time, the San Diego Police Department routinely patrolled the area to ensure safety. That no longer happens due to budget and personnel restrictions. Increasing access into the canyon, particularly in as public a place as First Street, should only be considered if all the issues surrounding such a decision are taken into account and plans put into place to mitigate negative consequences of such action.

11/9/15: We live in the house just adjacent to the bridge on Palm Street, and heard about your organization just recently from our open space ranger, Jason Allen. Jason told us about your interest of making access to Maple canyon, just adjacent to our house. While we want everyone to be able to enjoy the wonderful open space, upon thoughtful consideration, we have serious concerns about these plans for many reasons, and would like for these concerns to be part of the decision making process.

11/10/15: While the homeless encampments as well as concern for drug related crime have been a concern for many reasons, our primary reason has been fire and hill safety as well as preservation of the eco system and habitat. We have been especially troubled by the progressive erosion of the area just next to our property (with concern of destabilizing the hillside next to our house) caused by people trying to use the hill and base of the bridge as a bike ramp, skate ramp and for other less desirable, frequently vandalous activities and not for nature hikes to enjoy the fauna and flora of the this wonderful and one of the last pieces of nature in the city. Hill stability is a very important safety concern, as our house is built on a very steep incline, but also for the community (city), due to the fact that there are several old very large eucalyptus trees (both on our and the city property).

We have been very impressed with the huge efforts over the past several years to greatly improve this beautiful piece of nature, and have seen return of wildlife and native vegetation.

11/11/15: I have lived for the last 25 years on Palm Street, between Maple and Arroyo Canyon. I am writing because I want to comment on something I read in your most recent email about potential access to Maple Canyon from 1st Avenue.

1st Avenue is one of the main corridors between downtown and uptown; and as such, it is heavily trafficked by homeless people. For many years, before access to Maple Canyon from 1st Avenue was closed off by neighbors living on Palm St., the area under the 1st Avenue Bridge was a permanent homeless encampment, replete with the usual problems of trash, unsanitary conditions, and illegal campfires. Since it has been more difficult to access the canyon from 1st Avenue, there have been many fewer instances of people camping under the bridge.

I offer the above historical information with the hope that the planning group will distinguish between convenient community access to the canyon vs. invitations to illegal encampments under the 1st Avenue Bridge.

General Stakeholder Comments:

11/9/15: Two points on the draft Note: 1. I volunteered to contact Uptown Planners, but was trumped by several folks in the front rows – so I don't plan to proceed with that. 2. I see no reference to my plea at the end for immediate attention to saving the segment of the trail near the North end that is on the verge of being destroyed by the coming rains.

11/9/15: At some convenient point in the future, I would be interested in knowing more about a regulatory distinction between a stream bed and a segment of a dry canyon that floods with stormwater run-off when it rains.