A REPORT OF THE
JOSHUA TREE REGIONAL TRAILS PROJECT:

Trail Access Points Into Joshua Tree National Park

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Trail Access Points Into Joshua Tree National Park

PREPARED FOR JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK
by the

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Trails are everywhere. There are trails in parks and forests, on private lands, along banks of rivers and the shores of lakes and oceans. There are trails in mountains and across prairies and trails winding through the densest urban areas. Unfortunately, few people think of individual trails as part of a system. A community may think of the trails within its boundaries as a system but more often than not that is as far as the thinking goes. There is little understanding of how the local system connects to an adjoining locality's system and how they are part of a statewide network that is part of a nationwide network of trails.

- Trails for All Americans,
  National Park Service, 1990
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Project Overview
PROJECT OVERVIEW

Demand for trails by visitors and neighboring residents continues to increase in the vicinity of Joshua Tree National Park (JOTR). Local governments and trail interest groups have also planned community trails and longer-distance regional trails, some of which are proposed to enter Joshua Tree National Park. Simultaneously, the park embarked on its Backcountry and Wilderness Management Plan, a planning process which the Superintendent recognized would need to consider trail access from surrounding communities. This plan would, for the first time, designate trail routes within the park's borders. Once designated, these routes would be slated to receive management attention for maintenance and directional signage. The difficulties posed in designating trails that travelled across park boundaries onto something other than a public access point (either public lands, a secured trail easement, or public rights-of-way) also provided impetus for undertaking this project.

The Joshua Tree Regional Trails Project was intended to improve coordination of trail planning between Joshua Tree National Park and adjacent local governments. The project's two primary goals were to: 1) identify and analyze proposed trail access points into the park and 2) articulate a potential system of regional trails centering on Joshua Tree National Park which could service to coordinate interagency trail planning.

This report contains information to assist Joshua Tree National Park in creating new and improving existing trail opportunities near park boundaries for both park visitors and neighbors. By detailing opportunities and constraints associated with a variety of proposed and existing trail access points, this report can assist Joshua Tree National Park in establishing trails that connect beyond park boundaries to establish the regional system of trails. This report, Trail Access Points Into Joshua Tree National Park, focuses on trail access issues on the national park boundaries. A second document, Envisioning a Regional System of Trails at Joshua Tree, pulls together existing plans for trails and shows how these begin to create a regional network of trails. This document is intended for wider distribution.

Project Objectives

The Joshua Tree Regional Trails Project was principally carried out by Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program at the request Joshua Tree National Park, in
consultation with local governments, citizens groups, and various individuals. RTCA provides technical assistance to citizen groups, local communities and governments, and national park units working to conserve river corridors and watersheds and to establish trails and greenways.

The following objectives were established for the Regional Trails Project, in consultation with JOTR staff, in the spring of 1995:

1. To identify and describe existing and desired regional trails that begin to make up a regional system of trails.

2. To provide information about regional trails and trail connections that could be incorporated into the Backcountry/Wilderness Management Plan being prepared by JOTR staff.

3. To identify opportunities and constraints for regional trail connections.

4. To provide technical assistance where feasible and as necessary to implement identified trail access routes.

5. To assist JOTR to liaison with neighboring communities and outside trail interests.

Glossary

A trail is a linear corridor with protected status and public access for recreation or transportation. The condition of the trail may differ, whether it is signed or unsigned, maintained or unmaintained, but the critical definition is that it is accessible to the public and is recognized by a public agency or local government as a trail.

A regional trail is one that connects public open spaces to another, provides the user an opportunity to travel a greater distance, is in public ownership, and is recognized by local authorities as an official trail.

The term social trail indicates trails created through regular usage over time, not through trail construction. Social trails are not generally recognized by public agencies, do not enjoy protected status, and may or may not be accessible to the public.

Trail access point refers to an area along the National Park boundary where trails are proposed to enter or are currently entering the park. These do not necessarily connect to an existing trail or trail route within the park.

Designated trail route will be established by Joshua Tree National Park’s Backcountry/Wilderness Management Plan to identify where trails will traverse the park’s backcountry.

Acronyms

BWMP—Backcountry/Wilderness Management Plan
BLM—Bureau of Land Management
GMP—General Management Plan
JOTR—Joshua Tree National Park
MWD—Metropolitan Water District
NPS—National Park Service
PGSO—Pacific/Great Basin System Support Office of National Park Service, located in San Francisco
RTCA—Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program of the National Park Service
4 WD—Four wheel drive

Joshua Tree Regional Trails
Management Plan (BWMP) process to plan for the backcountry and the new areas of the park as established under the California Desert Protection Act (Public Law 103-433). Given the ongoing nature of the BWMP and the difficulties an additional public working group could pose for that planning work, Phase I of the project was designed to dovetail with the ongoing BWMP process. A second phase of the Regional Trails Project could be undertaken in the future which would involve the public more fully. Suggestions for phase II are included in the recommendations section of this report.

The information for this report was compiled by RTCA staff through interviews with JOTR and other NPS staff, local trail advocates, representatives of local governments, and statewide trail enthusiasts over a period from January until December, 1995. These interviews identified trail-related issues, trail planning efforts underway, and potential opportunities and constraints for regional trails. Not enough resources or staff time were available for independent field work to verify the information or to more fully inform the recommendations. Additional information was gathered in spring, 1996, from two meetings which gathered together planners from neighboring cities, counties, and other public land management agencies. (Contacts for more information about trail proposals are included in Appendix A.) The recommendations section suggests ways to implement the opportunities discovered and to address issues and impacts related to trails.

Report Organization

This report summarizes the findings to date of the Regional Trails Project regarding trail access points and connections to outlying areas. The following section reviews proposed and existing trail access points on Joshua Tree National Park's boundaries. Each access point is described along with an analysis of opportunities and constraints for developing them for public use, and recommendations for next steps. A final section addresses overall coordination issues to be addressed and lays out considerations for a second phase of the Regional Trails Project.
Community Trail Planning
COMMUNITY TRAIL PLANNING

Trails provide not only recreation and a chance to experience nature, they can also provide alternative means of transportation, serve as a focal point for learning about history or ecology, maintain natural linkages between open spaces for wildlife migration, improve user’s health and wellbeing, and improve the quality of life in a community. Local residents’ interest in trails and in using trails to gain access to nearby open spaces are being met in some communities by the inclusion of a trails element or conceptual trails map in that community’s or county’s General Plan. At the same time, citizen groups and governments have supported efforts to connect systems of trails through and between communities and large open spaces with longer-distance or regional trails. These regional trails are also sometimes included in communities’ General Plans. This type of formal trail planning has been occurring on Joshua Tree National Park’s boundaries with very limited coordination between adjacent jurisdictions and park staff.

At the same time, trails and trail access points are being created informally through trail travel over time by local residents. These social trails can unintentionally result in resource damage to soils, plants, archeological, or other resources as well as potential trespass across private lands. Planning for appropriate trail connections, resulting through the consultation between JOTR, local governments, and trail users, is needed to meet resident’s desire to recreate while balancing resource protection and private land ownership concerns.

This section describes these community planning efforts as well as identifies areas where there appears to be significant social trail activity occurring. More details about specific trail access points are provided in the next section.

Planned Trail Access Points

By taking formal action to plan for trail use and development, communities are able to utilize a number of land use tools to establish a trails system. Without recognition in a community plan, new development can cut off or eliminate traditional trail routes. Previous informal social trail access can be denied by private landowners. In the vicinity of Joshua Tree National Park, both Riverside County and the town of Yucca Valley have taken formal action to recognize trails within their jurisdictions. The following summarizes these approved plans and their proposed access points into Joshua Tree National Park:
Riverside County: Coachella Valley Trails Plan

The Riverside County Board of Supervisors adopted the Coachella Valley Community Plan which included the Coachella Valley Trails Plan in 1991. This plan conceptually laid out a system of Regional Trails, Community Trails, and Class I Bike Paths (on-road bicycle lanes) across the Coachella Valley. This plan identified seven access points leading into Joshua Tree National Park, generally corresponding to canyons where cross-country trail travel had been anticipated by the county. The county is implementing the plan through land use controls, such as zoning or subdivision maps, to get trail segments dedicated as new development occurs. Riverside County also distributes money from a developer mitigation fund to build trails and trailheads in Coachella Valley. Approximately $400,000 has been provided through a contract with the Coachella Valley Trails Coalition to construct portions of the trail plan.

Town of Yucca Valley: General Plan

The Town of Yucca Valley’s 1995 General Plan included a conceptual trails map. This map laid out a system of primary and secondary trails and on-road bicycle routes. In addition, the plan also proposes to restore the California Riding and Hiking Trail (see inset), a statewide trail connecting from the intersection of La Contenta Road and the park’s northern boundary, north on La Contenta through the town of Yucca Valley to eventually reach Pioneertown. From there, trails exist to reach the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail. The Yucca Valley trails map calls for five access points into Joshua Tree National Park.

California Riding and Hiking Trail

In 1944, the California State Horseman’s Association first proposed statewide hiking and equestrian trails. This led to legislation in 1954 (Chapter 1469, Statutes of 1954) that authorized development of a 3,000 mile hiking and equestrian trail that would loop through some of the most scenic areas of California (see map). The California Riding and Hiking Trail currently exists only in fragments with one segment crossing Joshua Tree National Park from the North Entrance near Twentynine Palms to Black Rock Campground outside Yucca Valley.

According to the 1978 California Recreational Trails Plan, part of the rationale behind this trail was to help put veterans returning home from World War II back to work. Substantial trail links were completed in San Diego, Santa Barbara, Los Angeles, Kern and San Bernardino counties in the 1950s. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, acquisition and development monies for the trail became scarce. Most of the original Trail System underwent de facto abandonment by the Department of Parks and Recreation since that time. According to the 1978 plan, many easements have lapsed, a few have been quitclaimed, and some have been incorporated into other trail systems, such as the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail.

In the 1990s, there has been a resurgence in interest to restore the California Riding and Hiking Trail, led in part by the San Diego Trails Council and the California Greenways and Trails Foundation. The Town of Yucca Valley’s General Plan, restoring a connection from Joshua Tree National Park’s northern boundary to Pioneertown, is part of a larger effort to re-establish this statewide trail.
Map of the California Hiking and Riding Trail
Informal Access Points

Informal trail access points have been created most typically where park boundaries abut residential areas, such as in the vicinity of the West Entrance in unincorporated San Bernardino County. The neighborhood just outside the West Entrance has developed an extensive network of social trails inside the park that have subsequently been mapped by the local equestrians. All these social trails originate on private lands. Up to nine access points are shown on the locally produced trails map, but none of these are documented in a local or county planning document nor has access been secured. Although San Bernardino County adopted Open Space: A Plan for Open Space and Trails for the County of San Bernardino in the early 1990s, no trails are shown in the Joshua Tree area.

Other areas of potential informal access points are in remote areas where OHV use has sometimes crossed park boundaries, such as along the westernmost boundary near Morongo Valley. The Bureau of Land Management owns some of this land in a checkerboard pattern and manages it as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern. BLM has recently begun to reduce unauthorized motorized uses. This may be an area where public trail access could be provided in the near future, connecting JOTR to Morongo Valley and the Big Morongo Preserve via trails.

California Desert Planning

A different type of community planning in this region is that which addresses management of public lands within the California Desert. While these plans by and large have not addresses non-motorized trails and trail use, they are an important source of management direction for government agencies.

California local, state, and federal government organizations have long engaged in joint planning efforts for over 20 years designed to manage public lands within the California Desert. The passage of the California Desert Protection Act, Public Law 103-433 on October 31, 1996, heralded a new era in desert land management, yet grew out of earlier efforts to protect desert lands. In 1976, federal legislation mandated the preparation and implementation of a comprehensive long-range plan for the management, use, development and protection of public lands within the desert. This plan was released in 1980, providing a management "umbrella" under which other plans might emerge. In 1991, 27 California government organizations signed the Agreement on Biological Diversity to jointly develop ecosystem management plans for specific geographic regions. The Coachella Valley Multi-species Habitat Conservation Plan primarily has been addressing protection of sensitive, candidate, threatened and endangered species and management of their habitat.
Planned Regional Trails
PLANNED REGIONAL TRAILS

The following regional trails are currently being developed or have been proposed in one or more community trail plans. Regional trails are defined as trails that connect communities, open spaces, and public lands to each other. They are major trail routes, providing a framework for linking smaller community trails and individual trails into a larger, more comprehensive trail system. These trails are mapped in the accompanying report, *Joshua Tree Regional Trails: Envisioning a Network of Trails*, but are summarized here to provide more context to the proposed trail access points shown in the next section of this report.

Regional Trails Accessing Joshua Tree National Park

The following are regional trails that are proposed in one or more community trail plans to access or pass through Joshua Tree National Park:

*California Riding and Hiking Trail* This trail was first proposed in 1944 by the California Horseman's Association. Legislation in 1954 authorized development of this 3,000 mile hiking and equestrian trail to loop through scenic areas of California. Substantial trail links were completed in Southern California in the 1950s. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, acquisition and development monies for the trail became scarce. Most of the California Riding and Hiking Trail System since underwent de facto abandonment by the California Department of Parks and Recreation. Many easements lapsed, a few have been quitclaimed, and others have been incorporated into other trail systems. One of the few existing segments of this trail crosses Joshua Tree National Park from the park entrance near Twentynine Palms to the Black Rock Campground. Yucca Valley proposes an alignment leaving the park at La Contenta, traveling north to Buena Vista and then west through Pipes Canyon to connect to the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail.

*Long Canyon Trail* The existing primitive trail route, and the proposed formal trail development project, through Long Canyon provides direct trail connections with Desert Hot Springs, as well as Morongo Valley and Yucca Valley, depending on selection of trail routing alternatives (see description of the Long Canyon area access points in the previous section. Riverside County proposes to connect the Long Canyon Trail south to the Dillon Road Trail and Indio Hills trails, thereby connecting to other Coachella Valley communities.
**Indio Hills Trails** These trails are proposed in the Riverside County Trail Plan and incorporate existing trails in the vicinity of the Coachella Valley Preserve. The Preserve also provides potential trail connections to Pushawalla and Fan Hill canyons. Already a trail existing part way up Pushawalla Canyon provided by the Preserve. These trails also connect south to a potential crossing of Interstate 10, thereby connecting to southern Coachella Valley communities.

**Yucca Valley Primary Trails** In addition to proposing a route restoring the California Hiking and Riding Trail, Yucca Valley proposes routes along Kickapoo Trail (note: although called a "trail", this is actually a road), suggested connections could be made to the east towards the Village of Joshua Tree, and southwest towards Morongo Valley and Desert Hot Springs using existing OHV routes or a utility corridor running between Joshua Tree National Park and the Big Morongo Preserve.

**Regional Trails in the Vicinity of Joshua Tree National Park**

The following are regional trails proposed in one or more community trail plans that are in the vicinity of Joshua Tree National Park, but are not proposed to access or pass through the park. Some of the trails that do access the park, however, are planned to connect to these other regional trails.

**Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail** Development of this trail began in 1928. The passage of the National Trails System Act in 1968 established it as a National Scenic Trail. It was finally completed in 1993. It extends from Mexico to Canada, along the ridge of the Sierra Nevadas and Cascade Mountains Ranges. Here it crosses Interstate 10 west of Palm Springs, connecting the San Jacinto and San Gorgonio mountains. Several trails are proposed in the Riverside, San Bernardino and Yucca Valley plans to connect to this trail, including the California Riding and Hiking, Whitewater, and Mission Creek trails.

**Mission Creek Trail** This route is proposed to connect Desert Hot Springs with the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, crossing Highway 62, following Mission Creek. The Dillon Road, Indio Hills, and Long Canyon proposed trails also connect to the Mission Creek proposed trail according to the plan developed by Riverside County.

**Whitewater River Trail** This route is proposed in the Riverside County Trail Plan to connect Palm Springs and other Coachella Valley towns with the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail. Portions of the trail make up the Coachella Valley Bikeway and are in place. Other segments remain to be constructed. This provides a major connector to other Coachella Valley trails.

**Santa Ana River Trail** Although this proposed trail lies far to the west of Joshua Tree National Park, it provide the possibility of connecting the park to the Pacific Ocean.
via the California Riding and Hiking Trail. The Santa Ana River Trail starts at the river’s headwaters near Heart Bar in the San Bernardino Mountains. The Santa Ana River Trail, when developed, would connect from the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail at the ridge of the mountains down to the Pacific Ocean at Huntington State Beach. It is a joint project of San Bernardino, Riverside, and Orange counties. Many trail segments further west already exist and have received National Recreation Trail status.

*Dillon Road Trail* This route is proposed in the Riverside County Trail Plan to follow Dillon Road. It would provide connections to Joshua Tree National Park as well as provide for cross-valley travel north of Interstate 10.

*Coachella Valley Trails* These are primarily on-road trails that connect residents to nearby regional trails proposed in the Riverside County Trails Plan and implemented by valley communities such as La Quinta, Palm Desert, and Palm Springs. A route is also proposed by Riverside County to follow the All-American Canal, which would connect Dillon Road and Coachella Valley communities to the Salton Sea. The All-American Canal could also provide possible connections to Thermal Canyon, Mount Ridge and Box Canyon and into the Bureau of Land Management wilderness areas of Chuckawalla Mountains and

*Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail* This trail commemorates the 1775-76 settlement expedition led by Juan Bautista de Anza from Mexico to the San Francisco Bay. It became a component of the National Trails System in 1990. The National Park Service has completed a Comprehensive Management Plan for routing and administering the trail. This plan includes marking the historic route as a continuous auto route and developing parallel multiple-use recreational trail segments and interpretation sites, developed together with local governments and interested trail organizations. As shown in the plan, the trail will cross south of the Salton Sea, through the Santa Rosa Mountains by way of Bautista Canyon and into the Hemet/San Jacinto area towards Los Angeles County.

*Santa Rosa Mountains Trails* A network of trails cross the Santa Rosa Mountains and are accessible from Palm Springs, Coachella Valley communities, and Santa Rosa Mountain communities. These trails provide a connection to the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail and could potentially connect to the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail once that trail is in place. They could also provide connections to Anza Borrego Desert State Park.
Trail Access Points
TRAIL ACCESS POINTS

The following maps show both existing and proposed access points for trails entering Joshua Tree National Park. The Access Point Area Map shows the western half of Joshua Tree National Park and each of the proposed and informal trail access points. No proposed trail access points were found in the eastern half of the park. Following the area map, localized maps for each access point are included with associated text describing the proposed points, discussing opportunities and constraints, and identifying potentially interested parties.

Existing trails within Joshua Tree National Park were determined by whether they appeared on both the Tom Harrison’s Recreation Map of Joshua Tree National Park (1994) and in Patty Furbush’s On Foot in Joshua Tree: A Comprehensive Guide to a National Park Service Area (1992). Otherwise no trail, existing or proposed, was mapped within the National Park boundaries. Backcountry trails within JOTR will be formally designated through the Backcountry/ Wilderness Management Plan.

Trails outside the park, whether on the ground or not, were mapped as proposed unless the trail was on public land and was recognized in a community trails plan. Many of these trails appear on the ground due to extensive social trail use, but they are vulnerable to destruction or loss with development or enclosure of the public from these private lands.
Access Points Area Map

Trail Access Point Legend

1. Long Canyon
2. East and West Deception Canyons
3. Fan Hill Canyon
4. Pushawalla Canyon
5. Morongo Area
6. Black Rock and La Contenta Areas
7. West Entrance Area

Access Points Area Map

Joshua Tree Regional Trails Project
Long Canyon

Map Source: Seven Palms Valley Quad

Joshua Tree Regional Trails
Long Canyon

Description:

Two access points were proposed in the Riverside County Trails Plan. The first leading directly into Long Canyon would connect trails from Desert Hot Springs into the park. Riverside County, Bureau of Land Management, and Desert Hot Springs are in preliminary planning stages for developing a trailhead nearby the park boundary.

Opportunities and Constraints:

- This trail would connect to an existing community trail system running throughout Desert Hot Springs and could use the Metropolitan Water District’s access road.

- Riverside County is planning to build a trailhead near the intersection of Wide Canyon Road and Hacienda Drive using the Riverside County Trails Mitigation Fund and has contracted with the Coachella Valley Trails Coalition to construct it.

- Additional coordination is needed with Riverside County, Bureau of Land Management, Desert Hot Springs, and the Coachella Valley Trails Coalition regarding the timing of the construction of the new trailhead. Currently that project is on hold pending an official notification regarding NPS’ support for the trailhead project.

- In one routing alternative, the Long Canyon trail would have to climb out of the canyon to the plateau above, entailing significant trail construction, at an estimated cost of $175,000, and annual maintenance costs from $18,000 to $24,000.

- One less costly alternative could be to connect the trail to Chuckawalla Bill’s Spring (on a side canyon from Long Canyon) only, not to Black Rock area. Fewer users would be tempted to traverse the steep slopes up to the plateau. Another alternative would be to consider a route up a side canyon, off NPS land and then returning using another wash (see Morongo area).

- Neither Furbush nor Harrison reference trails in the eastern canyon, suggesting there are not good trail opportunities associated with that proposed access point.

Interested Parties:

Bureau of Land Management, Riverside County, Desert Hot Springs, Coachella Valley Trails Council, Metropolitan Water District, and adjacent landowners.
East and West Deception Canyons

Map Source: East Deception Canyon Quad

Joshua Tree Regional Trails
East and West Deception Canyons

Description:

Two access points are proposed for East and West Deception Canyons by Riverside County.

Opportunities and Constraints:

- These access points would connect to a cross-valley regional trail paralleling Dillon Road proposed by Riverside County.
- No reference by Furbush or Harrison to hiking or equestrian trails in these canyons.

Interested parties:

Bureau of Land Management, Riverside County, Metropolitan Water District, Coachella Valley Trails Council, Sky Valley, and adjacent land owners.
Fan Hill Canyon (Map 1)

Map Source: East Deception Canyon and Myoma Quads

Joshua Tree Regional Trails
Fan Hill Canyon

Description:

Two access points are proposed by Riverside County into the Fan Hill Canyon area. The trails plan, however, does not specify a trail alignment north of Dillon Road. (See Map of Pushawalla Canyon for second Fan Hill Canyon proposal.)

Opportunities and Constraints:

- Riverside County should consider proposing trail alignments north of Dillon Road.
- The existence of 4-WD roads could provide access to a trailhead or staging area accessible.
- There is a potential to connect the two canyons called "Fan Hill" in the County Trails Plan and Pushawalla Canyon with the Coachella Valley Preserve. The Preserve has built a trail through Pushawalla Canyon starting at Thousand Palms Road. The Preserve is then connected to other trails into the Coachella Valley, including a potential point to cross Interstate 10.
- There is also a possibility to connect through the Fan Hill canyons and Pushawalla Canyon to Keys View, a potentially popular trail destination point.

Interested Parties:

Coachella Valley Preserve, Bureau of Land Management, Riverside County, Coachella Valley Trails Council, Metropolitan Water District, Indio Hills and adjacent landowners.
Fan Hill and Pushawalla Canyons

Map Source: West Bermuda Canyon Quad

Joshua Tree Regional Trails
Pushawalla Canyon

Description:

Riverside County proposes a trail access point in the vicinity of Pushawalla Canyon, although the trails plan did not propose a specific alignment north of Dillon Road.

Opportunities and Constraints:

- Riverside County should consider proposing trail alignments north of Dillon Road.
- The existence of 4-WD roads could provide access to a trailhead or staging area accessible.
- There is a potential to connect Pushawalla Canyon with the Coachella Valley Preserve. The Preserve has constructed a trail part of the way up Pushawalla Canyon, south of Dillon Road. South of the Preserve, trails connect to other trails into the Coachella Valley, including a potential Interstate 10 crossing point.

Interested Parties:

Coachella Valley Preserve, Bureau of Land Management, Riverside County, Coachella Valley Trails Council, Metropolitan Water District, Indio Hills and adjacent landowners.
Morongo Area

Description:

No access points in this area have been formally proposed, however, the Bureau of Land Management is proposing new boundaries for its Area of Critical Environmental Concern and the Big Morongo Preserve. This proposed expansion would connect BLM’s lands with the park’s western boundary in some place which could facilitate trail connections between the two areas.

Opportunities and Constraints:

- Creating a trail access point where a tributary to Long Canyon leaves the park boundaries could serve as a routing alternative for a Long Canyon trail (see Long Canyon area).

- Additional trail opportunities and trail access points may become available as Big Morongo Preserve eliminates some OHV use in the area and rehabilitates former roads into trails.

Interested parties:

Bureau of Land Management, Big Morongo Preserve, Yucca Valley, Desert Hot Springs, San Bernardino County, Riverside County, the Wildlands Trust, adjacent landowners.
Yucca Valley: Black Rock Area (Map 1)

Map Source: Yucca Valley South Quad

Joshua Tree Regional Trails
Yucca Valley: Black Rock

Description:

The town of Yucca Valley proposes four access points in this area, two utilizing a former dirt road in the vicinity of a radio tower, one connecting from South Park, and the fourth connecting existing National Park Service facilities at the Black Rock Ranger Station.

Opportunities and Constraints:

- There is heavy equestrian use in this area, traveling from nearby residences and from the staging area. Many of the trails outside the park already exist from social trail use. Many exist inside the park from this type of use as well.

- New residential development in this area could give Yucca Valley the opportunity secure trail access by conditioning that development.

- A private landowner of Sections 13 and 15 has expressed interest in developing an equestrian center, providing public trail access in this area into Joshua Tree National Park. Specific alignments and agreements would need to be established between NPS, Yucca Valley, and the landowner to provide this access.

- The two westernmost access points could provide access for Long Canyon trail users. A trailhead could be established for this purpose. The existing facilities at Black Rock could also be used for the Long Canyon connection.

- Loop opportunities could also be created by making connections to the Bureau of Land Management’s Big Morongo Preserve and Area of Critical Environmental Concern if there is interest on the part of BLM (see Morongo area).

- Yucca Valley’s Trails Committee is interested in a route inside the park paralleling the northern park boundary to connect the horse staging facility with the Riding and Hiking Trail connection at La Contenta.

Interested parties:

Yucca Valley, San Bernardino County, Bureau of Land Management, Morongo Basin Horseman’s Association, adjacent landowners.
Yucca Valley: La Contenta

Description:

The town of Yucca Valley proposes a trail connection leading from La Contenta Road directly south into the park. This trail connection would be formally part of the California Riding and Hiking Trail. A second trail access point, not included in Yucca Valley’s general plan, but in use by the public, is along a dirt road connecting from La Contenta to Covington Flats.

Opportunities and Constraints:

- Yucca Valley is in the process of restoring the California Riding and Hiking Trail through the town which would eventually make a connection from the park to the Pacific Crest Trail. When opportunities arise, the town can potentially condition development to secure trail access along La Contenta.

- JOTR may need to re-sign and re-designate its portion of the Riding and Hiking Trail to meet the town’s connector at La Contenta.

- A trailhead/staging area outside park boundary at La Contenta could be jointly developed to provide public access to the California Riding and Hiking Trail. Alternatively, the facilities at Black Rock could be used with a connector provided along the park’s northern boundary.

- The *Bicycle Guide to Yucca Valley* shows a route for mountain bicycle use to Eureka Peak using Vermiculate Mine Road. JOTR should consider designating the route from La Contenta to Eureka Peak as open to mountain bicycles or work with local mountain bicyclists to determine other suitable routes which could be viewed as a substitute.

Interested parties:

Yucca Valley, San Bernardino County, California Trails and Greenways Foundation, Morongo Basin Horseman’s Association, Coachella Cycling Association, and adjacent landowners.
Joshua Tree: West Entrance

Map Source: Joshua Tree South Quad

Joshua Tree Regional Trails
Joshua Tree: West Entrance

Description:

Local residents have created social trails across private properties that connect to a system of social trails within the park boundaries. One major access point is located just north of the entrance road, but there are nine unofficial points of access shown on informal maps created by local equestrians for this area.

Opportunities and Constraints:

• The West Entrance could be re-designed to incorporate a trailhead or staging area. Trail users could be encouraged to pass through the Entrance Station to pay a visitor’s fee prior to using the trail system if a trailhead were developed in this area.

• Landowners in Monument Manor, Panoramic Heights, and Joshua Highlands may have allowed trespass to gain access to the trails in this area, but access has not been formalized, and access has been restricted to certain users. San Bernardino County or the Village of Joshua Tree could work to secure trail access for these residents.

• The access point on the park’s northwest corner is used sometimes by OHVs, an informal and illegal recreational use in this part of the park.

• Two parcels of land are owned in this area by the Bureau of Land Management, although there is some question as to whether the Village of Joshua Tree is responsible for its management. Public access could potentially be accommodated through a partnership between these entities and the National Park Service.

Interested parties:

Village of Joshua Tree, San Bernardino County, Bureau of Land Management, Morongo Basin Horseman’s Association, OHV users, adjacent landowners.
Recommendations
RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are intended for Joshua Tree National Park’s consideration and implementation. These recommendations identify steps to: 1) formalize or improve trail access; 2) reduce or remove use of social trails and access points not suitable for trail use either due to resource damage concerns or lack of trail opportunities within park boundaries; 3) encourage better interagency coordination in trail planning, and 4) incorporate trail access points into the Backcountry/Wilderness Management Plan. A fifth area of recommendation is how to proceed with a second phase of the Joshua Tree Regional Trails Project.

Formalize and improve trail access

The following steps are suggested for JOTR’s consideration and possible action. Some of these recommended steps may need to wait for the completion of the Backcountry/Wilderness Management Plan (BWMP) in late 1996, while some could be acted on prior to that plan’s completion. JOTR could undertake the following steps to formalize or improve trail access:

- Communicate support for Long Canyon to the Bureau of Land Management, Riverside County and the City of Desert Hot Springs for the proposed trailhead and encourage these agencies to move forward with trailhead construction. This action may need to wait for a formal designation of trails through the BWMP.

- Work with interested parties in the Long Canyon project to determine and select routing alternatives for trails using the proposed Long Canyon trailhead. This could occur prior to the completion of the BWMP.

- Work with the Bureau of Land Management, Coachella Valley Preserve, Riverside County, Coachella Valley Trails Council to plan connector trails from the Preserve to the park boundaries, selecting one or more of the proposed access points as contained in the Riverside County Trails Plan. This could occur prior to the completion of the BWMP.

- Work with Yucca Valley and private landowners to secure public trail access across private land in the Black Rock Area or formally request Yucca Valley remove these proposed access points from its trails map. This may need to wait for the completion of the BWMP.
- Re-designate the California Riding and Hiking Trail within park boundaries to connect to La Contenta, Yucca Valley’s route for the trail. This may need to wait for the completion of the BWMP.

- Encourage San Bernardino County and Yucca Valley to coordinate in planning for trail connections to Pioneertown and the continuation of the California Riding and Hiking Trail. This could occur prior to the completion of the BWMP.

- Consider including trailhead or staging area facilities in the re-design of the West Entrance Station area as a substitute for informal access points developed over private lands. This could occur prior to the completion of the BWMP.

- Encourage the Bureau of Land Management and the Village of Joshua Tree to resolve the management of land near Joshua Tree’s northern boundary to potentially provide public trail access in the vicinity of the West Entrance. This could occur prior to the completion of the BWMP.

- Include a provision within the BWMP to designate additional trails and trail access points as adjacent communities acquire public access.

Reduce use of unsuitable access points

JOTR could undertake the following steps to reduce the use of access points that do not provide good trail opportunities, which may involve trespass on private lands, or impact to important park-related resources:

- Formally request that Riverside County remove access points from Long Canyon, East and West Deception Canyon, and possibly one or both of the access points in Fan Hill Canyon from their Coachella Valley Trails Plan due to lack of trail opportunities within the park boundaries.

- Reduce ongoing use of social trails and informal trail access points by: 1) physical signage and construction strategies; 2) provide better directional signage for designated trails; 3) conduct an outreach and education program in the adjacent communities to broaden resident’s understandings of the adverse impacts of social trail use.

- Produce and distribute information about access points and appropriate trail use in Spanish for park visitors on the southern end of the park.

Coordinate Interagency Trail Planning

The following recommendations, in addition to the site-specific suggestions contained above,
would, if implemented, improve interagency cooperation and coordination in trail planning. JOTR could take the lead in any of these proposed activities or encourage another entity to do so. Some of the tasks could be included in Phase II of the project and coordinated by the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program as well:

- Develop an interagency database of geographic information, mapping trail alignments, both existing and proposed.

- Publicize regional trail information broadly, highlighting all the existing trails managed by different agencies or jurisdictions.

- Convene a meeting of trail interest groups, such as the Coachella Valley Trails Coalition, Morongo Basin Backcountry Horseman’s Association, for example, to consider and implement recommendations included in this report and the document on creating a regional trails network.

- Develop consistent signage/logos to highlight the connection of trails to Joshua Tree National Park.

- Submit joint project proposals that could be eligible for NPS and BLM Challenge Cost-Share Funding, Riverside County Developer Mitigation Fund monies, or National Recreational Trails Trust Fund monies.

- Encourage ongoing California Desert planning efforts to consider regional trail use as a conservation and economic development strategy for desert communities.

Incorporate Trail Access into the Backcountry/Wilderness Management Plan

As the Joshua Tree Regional Trails Project was designed to dovetail with the BWMP, information included in this report could be considered and incorporated into the BWMP as appropriate.

- Include a chapter on regional trails and ongoing trail planning efforts as a chapter in the BWMP as a means of providing context to internal trail planning issues.

- Establish a process in the Backcountry/Wilderness Management Plan by which trails could be designated as the adjacent land managing agency or public jurisdiction secures appropriate public access.

Considerations for Phase II of the Joshua Tree Regional Trails Project

A second phase of the Regional Trails Project could build on this initial work to more fully examine opportunities and constraints in creating a regional system of trails and to coordinate
more fully with outside entities to establish access points. Possible Phase II projects include: the creation of a Geographic Information System for regional trails, the production of a user-friendly map of regional trails, or creation of a brochure for the general public promoting the idea of regional trail system. Phase II could also focus more directly on improving aspects of interagency cooperation in trail planning.

Phase II would require more formal, in-depth cooperator relationships with entities that were involved in Phase I. Cooperators would take on work tasks, serve as ambassadors to the local communities, and other key roles. A joint workplan for the cooperators would need to be developed. Similarly, JOTR would need to identify a primary contact person within the park staff to work with RTCA and be responsible for this project. Finally, as RTCA has undergone a reduction in staff in the past year, commitment to a second phase, if desired, would come under consideration as a project in Fiscal Year 1997.

Conclusion

The Joshua Tree Regional Trails Project identified ongoing efforts and vision for a regional network of trails, centered around access to and through Joshua Tree National Park. Phase I of the project focused on analysis of proposed trail access points on the park's boundaries, as well as summarizing the trail planning efforts into a conceptual regional trails map (contained in a separate document). Recommendations, if implemented by Joshua Tree National Park and its partners, would serve to improve regional trail use opportunities for both park visitors and park neighbors.
Appendices
APPENDIX A: CONTACTS FOR MORE INFORMATION

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APPENDIX B: SOURCE MATERIALS


Tom Harrison, Recreation Map of Joshua Tree National Park, San Rafael, California, Tom Harrison Cartography, 1994.


Riverside County, Coachella Valley Community Plan, Coachella Valley Trails, Board of Supervisors Adopted, October 29, 1991.

Riverside County, Comprehensive General Management Plan, Open Space and Conservation, Regional Trails, Board of Supervisors Adopted, December 19, 1989.

San Bernardino County, Open Space: A Plan for Open Space and Trails for the County of San Bernardino, Board of Supervisors Adopted, 1991.
