



MEETING SUMMARY

Recreation Management and Visitor Use and Needs at Silverwood SRA

Meeting Details

Date: 20 September 2017

Time: 10:00am

Location: Teleconference

Objectives: Gather information on recreation management and visitor use and needs at Silverwood Lake SRA

Attendees

Lisa McCandless, Stantec; Kirby Gilbert, Stantec; Anitra Kass, Pacific Crest Trails Association (PCTA)

Summary

Pacific Crest Trails Association is focused on protecting, preserving and promoting the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail. Anitra Kass is the Southern California Regional Representative for the PCTA. Anitra (Akass@PCTA.org / 951-257-4100) provided general information on the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) and information specific to the sections of the PCT that run through or adjacent the Silverwood Lake State Recreation Area.

- Anitra mentioned that there are a lot of PCT projects happening around Silverwood Lake. The FERC relicensing process was explained, and we clarified that our project is for DWR and for the sections of the PCT that are within the Project boundary.
- When asked about use and the relationship of the PCT to the park, Anitra noted concerns about the proposed Tapestry development. She noted that the increased use from new residents at Tapestry will have an impact on the trail and in general, recreation on the public lands surrounding the lake (State Recreation Area and the USFS lands).

- Anitra gave an overview of the PCT: The PCT is a National Scenic Trail that was designated by an act of congress in 1968. The trail spans from the Californian and Mexican border to the Washington and Canadian border. Over the past ten years use has increased significantly. Thru-hiking (going from the southern terminus to the northern terminus) is popular on the trail. This type of use has grown from a few hundred people per year (ten years ago) to over a few thousand people each year (current). Most thru-hikers begin in April or May.
- PCTA has a MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with State Parks, the Forest Service, and other public land managers, in order to address improvements, maintenance, and operations of the PCT on these public lands.
- The PCT has a cost share agreement with the USFS. The USFS has asked PCTA to issue long distance hiker permits for those people that plan to hike 500 or more miles. The PCT Long Distance Hiker Permit application includes information about the start date, start location, and anticipated end date and location. Anitra provided the following website link, which lists statistics on PCT hiking permits: <https://www.pcta.org/our-work/trail-and-land-management/pct-visitor-use-statistics/>
- There are two types of PCT hikes that require a permit: long distance hikes greater than 500 miles, and thru-hikes, for those that intend to hike from the Californian and Mexican border to the Washington and Canadian border. There is a limited number of long distance and thru-hiker permits available. The maximum is 50 permits per day during peak hiking season, which is March through June for different trailhead locations. In 2013, there were 988 northbound thru-hiker permits issued. In 2016, there were 3,164 northbound thru-hiker permits issued. More statistics are available at the PCT permit numbers link that was provided above.
- For thru-hikers, beginning at the Californian and Mexican border means that hikers will take approximately 3-4 weeks to reach Silverwood Lake.
- Equestrian use on the trail was discussed. Long distance permits for equestrian use are minimal. In 2016, thru-hiker permits were issued to equestrians. In 2013, only one thru-hike permit was issued. Some of the equestrian use is related to trail maintenance and crews using horses to transport tools.
- It was noted that long distance hikers and thru-hikers are a small percentage of people that actually use the trail. The permit application process allows PCTA and the USFS to track the number of long distance trail users. However, actual use on the trail is not easily tracked because most use of the PCT is from local people who use the trail for recreational hiking.
- Maintenance of the PCT within the Silverwood Lake State Recreation Area was discussed. Anitra noted that some of the trail was burned by the Pilot and Blue Cut fire in 2016.

Devil Canyon Project Relicensing

- The PCTA, California Conservation Corps, American Conservation Experience, and various other volunteer groups do trail maintenance in and around Silverwood Lake. State Parks does not do trail maintenance on the PCT, but will support maintenance efforts in other ways (i.e. by providing campsites and entry to the State Recreation Area).
- If a section of the PCT requires relocation or re-alignment, there is an Optimal Location Review Process (OLR) that must take place. More information is available at the following link
location: https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5368489.pdf
- A section of the PCT that is west of highway 138 may need re-alignment. The USFS is the lead agency and is in the process of changing the legal easement to facilitate this re-alignment.
- The section near Highway 173 where DWR may add fencing was addressed. Anitra said that they prefer fencing type projects to be located in the less pristine areas. The fencing that DWR proposes will need to meet PCTA's guidelines.
- As a result of the Project, other impacts to the PCT that were noted include, garbage and sanitary issues, and bike use on the trail, which is not allowed on the PCT. Anitra mentioned that these issues may be an indirect effect of the Project. However, these issues may be more closely related to the fact that Silverwood Lake is near an area with a large population that has easy access to the PCT.
- Signage along the PCT is maintained by PCTA. Signage standards and specifications are set forth by the USFS.