



NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

FILING REQUESTED BY AND WHEN FILED, RETURN TO:

Marin County Parks and Open Space District
1600 Los Gamos Drive, Suite 275; San Rafael, CA 94903
www.parks.marincounty.gov/
(415) 473-6387

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02/12/2026

SHELLY SCOTT
MARIN COUNTY CLERK
By A.Oxlaj Arevalo Deputy

Marin County Clerk
3501 Civic Center Drive, Suite 234
San Rafael, CA 94903

DATE: February 12, 2026 **21-2026-032**
PROJECT TITLE: **SORICH TRAIL IMPROVEMENT AND CHANGE-IN-USE**
PROJECT LOCATION: Terra Linda/Sleepy Hollow Open Space Preserve, San Rafael, Marin County, CA
ASSESSORS' PARCEL(S): 177-240-20, 177-220-61, 177-240-03

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of the Project: The Marin County Open Space District (MCOSD) is proposing the Sorich Trail Improvement Project, the purpose of which is to improve the existing trail to MCOSD multi-use standards¹ and change the trail use from hiking and equestrian use only to multi-use, which would allow bike use to provide a multi-use connection between the Town of San Anselmo and the Sun Valley and Terra Linda neighborhoods of San Rafael.

Project Area Existing Conditions: The Sorich Trail is a mid-slope trail² extending from Cemetery Fire Road to Sorich Park, which is operated by the Town of San Anselmo, to the Mission Pass Bike Path. It is approximately 1,650 feet in length with an average gradient of 7 percent and an average width of 3 feet. The trailhead is located within Sorich Park, which is managed by the town of San Anselmo. Shortly beyond the trailhead, the trail crosses into the MCOSD's Terra Linda/Sleepy Hollow Divide Open Space Preserve. The upper end of Sorich Trail intersects with Cemetery Fire Road, which continues up to the crest of Terra Linda Ridge. The trail traverses the south side of Terra Linda Ridge through a eucalyptus forest above the town of San Anselmo. The trail intersects four water courses. The structures utilized to cross these streams include one armored fill, one wooden pedestrian bridge, and two corrugated metal pipes. Sorich Trail is currently designated for hiking and equestrian use. It is popular with hikers and dog walkers, but cyclists are prohibited.

Sorich Trail within Terra Linda/Sleepy Hollow Divide Open Space Preserve is delineated in MCOSD's Vegetation Management Zone map as a Highly Disturbed Zone System Zone. No rare plant species are known to have previously occurred within the study area. The project area includes two vegetation types, both of which are dominated by non-native species, including the *Avena* spp. - *Bromus* spp. Herbaceous Semi-Natural Alliance, which occupies approximately 15 percent of the project area and the *Eucalyptus (globulus, camaldulensis)* Semi-Natural Association, which occupies approximately 85 percent of the study area. No rare plant taxa were located during field surveys.³

The project area does not include critical habitat for any special-status wildlife species and while habitat in the project vicinity supports nesting habitat, no nests were identified during surveys.⁴

Project Description: The trail will be upgraded to multi-use standards to support the proposed change-in-use. Implementation of the proposed change-in-use would eliminate a gap to provide a multi-use connection between the Town of San Anselmo and the Sun Valley and Terra Linda neighborhoods of San Rafael. The proposed trail improvements would include widening the existing trail to a 4-foot width, improving tread condition by implementing trail drainage techniques and armoring the trail surface, and improving site lines by removing small diameter trees. The proposed project would replace an existing ditch-relief culvert, construct a vented causeway climbing turn to drain ditch relief culvert flows under the trail, and install a rock wall. These techniques and features are described below. Approximately 0.15 acres would be affected by project implementation.

¹ A MCOSD multi-use trail provides trail access for hiking, biking, and equestrian use.
² A mid-slope trail is a type of hiking or walking path that is located on the side of a slope, typically providing scenic views and access to various recreational areas.
³ Botanical Assessment of the Sorich Park Trail. Julian Geoghegan, MCOSD Senior Program Coordinator. October 2025.
⁴ Biological Report – Sorich Park Trail. Serena Hubert, MCOSD Wildlife Biologist. June 2025.

Implementation of the proposed project is planned to begin in April 2026 and would take approximately 4 weeks to complete using MCOSD trail crew. Equipment and material staging would occur from March 30th to April 30th. Staging would occur at the Sorich Park parking lot and Cemetery Fire Road. The equipment required to implement the proposed project would include a trail dozer, mini excavator, tracked carrier, water tender, and compactor. Standard trail construction included in the MCOSD's RTMP Best Management Practices (BMPs) would be implemented for dust control, sediment transport from the work site, and spill containment precautions.

The MCOSD would secure a Right-to-Enter Agreement or an easement from the Town of San Anselmo for work on the 270 feet of trail located on their property.

Trail Tread and Sight-line Improvements. Implementation of the proposed project would include re-grading the entire length of the existing trail bench to provide a trail width suitable for multi-use and to improve trail drainage. The trail would be armored to harden the trail surface and reduce degradation of the trail tread over time. The existing trail width would be widened to 4-feet by lowering trail tread up to one foot. The trail surfacing treatment would include overlaying trail tread with aggregate base rock or similar up to 48-inches-wide and 6-inches deep. The volume of material would be approximately 122 cubic yards. One section of the existing trail includes a switchback which would be removed and replaced with an 80-foot-long trail extension to lessen grade to 7 percent. One section of the existing trail would include a rock wall to retain the trail, which would be 2-feet high, 2-feet wide, and 30-feet in length. Approximately 5 yards of 2-foot diameter rock would be utilized for the rock wall.

Implementation of the proposed project would require removal of four trees including three eucalyptus trees less than 8-inches diameter at breast height (dbh) and one bay tree less than 5-inches dbh to improve existing sight lines. There will be no impacts to wetlands, creeks, streams, lakes or San Pablo Bay. The proposed project will not remove, replace, or impact any of the existing stream crossing structures. No regulatory permit authorizations would be required to implement the proposed project.

Drainage Improvements. Implementation of the proposed project would include the following trail drainage improvements:

Rolling Dips. The proposed project would install 15 rolling dips to prevent runoff from draining longitudinally down Sorich Trail. This drainage treatment is a standard Best Management Practice (BMP) identified in the MCOSD's Road and Trail Management Plan (RTMP) to improve drainage and sustainability. Installation of the rolling dips would require localized recontouring of the soil and minimal excavation of the outward edge of Sorich Trail to create an outflow path for runoff.

Ditch Relief Culvert. The proposed project would replace an existing 20-foot long ditch relief culvert that drains the inboard ditch of Cemetery Fire Road near the Sorich Park Trailhead. The ditch relief culvert would be replaced with an 18-inch diameter, 25-foot-long ditch relief culvert set deeper to accommodate the proposed trail extension. The excavation length and depth to install the ditch relief culvert would be 25-feet and 3- feet, respectively. The trail would be resurfaced over the culvert.

Vented Causeway. A vented causeway⁵ would be installed along one of these climbing turns which would drain flows from the ditch relief culvert under the trail. The climbing turn would have a radius of 18 feet and the arch of the vented causeway would be 70 feet. Approximately 12 yards of 18-inch rock would be utilized to implement this drainage technique.

Protection Measures for Sensitive Resources: Applicable Polices and BMPs included in the MCOSD's RTMP would be implemented, including dry season construction, implementation of erosion control and water pollution prevention measures, requiring imported materials be supplied from a dependable seed-free and organic-matter vendor, and avoidance/minimization measures associated with special status species.

Project implementation is planned to occur in April 2026, which is during bird nesting season.⁶ To protect bird species, the MCOSD would conduct pre-construction bird surveys consistent with RTMP BMP Special-Status Wildlife -3: Season Restrictions During Bird Nesting Season. To ensure that no special-status species will be directly or indirectly impacted during construction, BMP Special-Status Wildlife – 8: Worker Awareness Training and BMP Special-Status Wildlife – 12: Trash Control would be implemented. If special-status species are observed during construction, the MCOSD would be notified immediately. In addition, BMP Special-Status Wildlife -10: Relocation of Special-Status Species would be used when necessary to inform the appropriate regulatory agency and to notify a qualified biologist to relocate the species. Following trail improvements, the area would be inspected to ensure habitats have not been significantly altered in the long-term to affect special-status species consistent with BMP Special-Status Wildlife -13: Road and Trail Inspections.

⁵ A structure with openings (vents) which permit normal surface flow to pass beneath it.

⁶ Bird nesting season for raptors in Marin County is January 01 - July 31 and for passerines is March 01 - July 31.

There are no known cultural or historical resources in the project area. Should a cultural resource or human remains be discovered during project implementation, project-related activities within 50 feet of the discovery would cease, MCOSD would directly notify the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, and MCOSD would implement recommendations from the FIGR regarding the discovery.

Public Agency Approving Project: Marin County Parks and Open Space District

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out the Project: Chris Chamberlain, Director and General Manager

Reasons for Exemption: The MCOSD has reviewed the project along with its environmental setting and has determined it to be categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act under the following sections of the California Administrative Code:

Section 15301: Existing Facilities: The proposed project consists of trail improvement at an existing public facility to lessen environmental impacts caused by erosion and sedimentation and a change-in-use to eliminate a gap in multi-use connection between the Town of San Anselmo and the Sun Valley and Terra Linda neighborhoods of San Rafael, consistent with the MCOSD's RTMP. The project area is not located on a hazardous waste site pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 or within a state scenic highway. Implementation of the proposed project would not affect scenic resources, historical buildings, rock outcroppings, or result in a significant effect to the environment due to unusual circumstances. There are no known cultural resources present in, or immediately adjacent to the project area and the MCOSD would directly notify the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria should there be an inadvertent discovery during project implementation. There are no wetlands, Waters of the State, or Waters of the United States within the project area, no special-status plant species, habitats, or wildlife within the project area. Since project implementation would occur during bird nesting season, the MCOSD would conduct pre-construction nesting surveys and avoid construction in the area should an active nest be located to avoid direct loss of individual birds. On-going trail maintenance has occurred in the project area and would continue in the future. Implementation of the proposed project would not result in impacts that are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.

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