



SLC FOOTHILLS FAQ



ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

How can trail corridors be identified without a baseline of resource conditions? What kind of wildlife and water erosion research was done before trails were built in phase 1, and what has been done now?

In the SWCA pre-NEPA environmental review and the SE Group recommendations update, the City developed a thorough trail development process with a step-by-step process to assess environmental and recreational considerations. This includes baseline resource and conditions followed by on-the-ground study before a final approved trail. Some, but not enough, wildlife and water erosion research was conducted. Any adjustments to phase I trails, in addition to adjustments to pre-existing trails (i.e. Bonneville Shoreline Trail, user-created trails), all of which curred without any environmental research, will be included in the SE Group recommendations report.

Is NEPA required by law? How long does the NEPA process take?

Salt Lake City Public Lands acknowledges that an insufficient amount of research was completed before phase 1 construction and has changed the way that development of any future trails will occur so that environmental review and natural resource evaluation occurs at multiple points. Although NEPA is a process required for Federal land, SLC recognizes that animals, habitat, trails and trail users cross multiple areas. For this reason, although not required, the City will follow this level of environmental assessment to provide a higher level of natural resource protection.

SUSTAINABILITY, TRAIL DESIGN & NEW TRAILS

Are new trails necessary?

The goal of the Trails Plan is to protect the Foothills' natural environments by creating accessible recreational opportunities for all trail users. The existing trails in the Foothills came about with no environmental or recreational planning or considerations and needs a management plan for conservation. To meet the goals of the plan and our environmental and residential communities, active restoration is needed in areas where trails are damaging the landscape and new trails must be thoughtfully cared for to minimize the disturbance of our growing population and increase in Foothills visitors.

What are the first priority new trails to build?

These will be identified as part of the current evaluation. All trail alignments identified in the Trails Plan, will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and will go through complete analysis before construction.

When will signs be installed?

Signage is going in as quickly as we can. City staff is tracking areas in need of signage and will do their best to get those distributed.

Please define the terms “formal” and “informal” trails

For the purpose of designating trails as part of the “SLC Foothills Trail System Plan”, the term “formal” may be used as a trail that was built as part of the plan or was an existing trail that has been integrated into the “formal” trail system. “Informal” trails tend to be the user-created trails that have evolved from use over time and tend to follow gully bottoms or ridge lines. The goal is for formal trails to be sustainable by the terms defined in the plan so that erosion and soil displacement is minimal over time.

There is significant soil displacement obviously during trail construction and minor erosion in the following few years as a trail corridor settles into the landscape. It is not assumed that informal trails are unsustainable, but evidence shows that many informal trails in the Foothills run along water erosion fall lines and thus are holding water and displacing more soil than a sustainable trail would. Public Lands will rehabilitate some “informal” trails or segments to become formal trails in the trail system.

What about environmental damage on or near trails, like runoff degrading the trail, or trail braiding? How will this be prevented in the future?

The BST Dry Creek trail is an example of what happens when a trail is built or occurs in a gully bottom. While usually “dry”, the spring snow melt reminded us that the trail was built in a creek bottom, which should be preserved for habitat and the riparian environment. A sustainable trail would have been designed and built along the rolling hillside contours of the canyon’s various forks so runoff would run across the trail instead of down the trail.

Trail braiding occurs when trail users leave a designated or intended trail corridor, which over time leads to trampled vegetation and wider or multiple branches of trail segments along the corridor. This frequently occurs in the Foothills at trail junctions when trail users short cut corners or chose routes to avoid loose, rocky segments of a steep ridge line trail. It also frequently occurs on trails in the Foothills that hold water and are muddy due to inadequate drainage. Trail users consequently widen the trail corridor by trampling vegetation while trying to avoid the mud. Trail braiding is most effectively reduced through community education. SLC Public Lands will use their Foothills Rangers, their SLC Be WILD etiquette campaign, signage on trail and at trailheads, volunteer steward training, and with temporary fencing for restoration areas to help with these efforts.

ENFORCEMENT

How do we intend to keep watersheds free from pet waste and dog waste?

To clarify, the City Creek Canyon Watershed is part of the City’s drinking water and does not allow dogs. This area is managed by SLC Public Utilities and is not included as part of the Foothills Trail System Plan. As for general watersheds, the most effective way to reduce pet waste is similar to other concerns which is through community education. (See above re: rangers, signage, Be WILD, volunteers.). Keeping dogs on leash and on trail will minimize the impact to the environment. We're doing as much training, education as we can to get people to reward them, educate them, train training humans to pick up their animals waste.

In order to limit the impact that we have on our natural resources, and the experience of Toother trail users, we encourage you to keep dogs on designated pathways, close to you and under control at all times. Dogs must be on-leash at all times in the Foothills Natural Area for everyone to enjoy a great time.

Please do not allow pets to run through open spaces, or travel outside of the trail corridor, as this leads to resource destruction, the spread of invasive weeds, and can be unsafe for wildlife, as well as your pets.

Why are e-bikes allowed in the foothills?

Motorized vehicles are prohibited from the Foothills by ordinance, which technically should include e-bikes. Since e-bikes have grown in popularity and power so rapidly, local, regional, state, and federal land managers have not been able to adapt create clear enforcement policies at the same rate. However, in the interest of environmental resource and community safety, the City will be requiring e-bikes to ridden as a traditional mountain bike, meaning active pedaling with e-assist as needed. The use of a throttle-only, or e-bikes without pedals and cranks (these are actually motorcycles) are not permitted. Like other trail use restrictions and regulations, the reduction of unauthorized e-bikes and motorized vehicles use must occur with robust signage and community education.

Salt Lake City Public Lands is also launching a new educational campaign to help the public understand the ways in which we can work together to protect the natural environment while enjoying it responsibly.

What ability do Rangers have to enforce rules?

Public Lands Ranger Program: Two Public Lands Rangers dedicated to the Foothills began patrolling in the fall of 2022. Their goal is to be stewards for the Foothills by supporting trail users, educating the community on use regulations, and working with Public Lands staff on overall land management. They don't have the ability to force, they not compliance officers. Their goal is compliance through education. They will be posting announcements and hosting meet and greets at trailheads. If you see them say hello!

How do we safely navigate trails with multi-use users and be inclusive?

When yielding to, or passing, other trail users: step off to the side of the trail, but don't continue walking outside of the trail corridor (our foothills are essential habitat for many species of flora and fauna that exist just outside the trail corridor) If using multi-use, two-directional trails, stay aware of your surroundings to ensure that you can hear other users trying to pass. As stewards of our public lands, our goal is to create Inclusive Spaces to ensure that these natural areas can be enjoyed equally by diverse users.

ACCOUNTABILITY & MANAGEMENT

What do you envision for the size and investment of a management team?

SLC Public Lands Department has requested funds from the City Council for a dedicated Foothills maintenance team. The future size of the Foothills Management Team will be determined based on a balance of need and available resources.

Where does the funding come from and how will you pay for maintenance?

Funding for the department comes from an annual budget approved by Salt Lake City Council and the Salt Lake City Mayor. General maintenance and administration budgets are derived from tax revenues, while improvement projects are often funded with a combination of tax revenue dollars, grants, and private donations. The trails and natural lands come from a variety of places - acquisitions, gifting, easements, etc. Each land is addressed in the best way possible to serve the public in function and use.

What role will the Mayor & City Council play in approval of the plan and moving forward?

Salt Lake City is committed to protecting the Foothills Natural Area while maintaining sustainable access for our residents and visitors. We have committed to adding more environmental review and will undertake a resource and land management plan to help solidify the ways in which environmental protection and use can be managed together.

The Public Lands Department is growing, and we are excited to continue to add new staff and resources to support protection and management in the Foothills. We will continue to rely on volunteers and support from community organizations and look forward to launching a more formalized stewardship and volunteer program in 2023 and 2024.

The Mayor and City Council will review the proposed recommendations from the Foothills Trail System Plan Review process and determine which should advance as an appendix to the original plan. They will also help determine if, and when, the pause on new trail building should be lifted.

What are your plans to collect user data and how will it inform the management of the trail network (existing and future trails)?

User data has been incorporated into the recommendations coming as part of the Phase 1 and plan review. Those recommendations include the addition of more trail counters and cameras, as well as the use of open-source data like that from Strava and AllTrails. Public Lands agrees that user data is important in managing the existing network and in planning future trails. It is also critical to understand who is NOT visiting the Foothills and why. This will occur through continued community engagement and user surveys at various venues throughout the City.

User data will not be the only source of input considered in making these important decisions for the Foothills.

What's taking so long to keep the trails vision moving forward?

Between 2020 and 2021, the City began working on the first phase of the plan. They constructed and rehabilitated 15-20 miles of new trail and closed some pre-existing trails. Due to public concern, the City paused to re-evaluate its plan and confirm that future phases meet the overall plan's vision and goals to: provide a variety of recreational trail experiences for diverse ages and abilities while managing the Foothills' environmental resources for future generations.

In taking a step back, the Public Lands Department learned of ways to better include the voices of the community as well as strength their environmental resource protection and recreational planning practices. Now, the Department is moving forward with an updated plan that includes the comments of the public and advocacy groups, in addition to building relationships with Native American Tribal leaders.

What can the public do to help the City with trails planning?

There are many opportunities to become involved with Trails & Natural Lands. You can help by volunteering, attend our monthly Citizen Advisory Board Meetings, or providing feedback so that professional trail designers and consultants can incorporate any recommendations.

What cultural resources have been identified and what are plans for teaching a history of in respect for the indigenous people who lived on this land?

Salt Lake City delayed completion of the Twin Peaks trail to refocus efforts to engage and consult tribal representatives. The City regularly attends tribal coalition meetings and have been advised by tribal community representatives, Urban Indian Center, and Utah Division of Indian Affairs that their primary areas of concern are City Creek and Warm Springs natural areas. Tribal engagement will continue to be a priority and will help guide future decisions and processes of the trail system plan. Tribal community members and historians will also participate in identifying potential areas and trails for indigenous naming.

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

What is the timeframe for the Trails Plan?

Construction is currently paused, but recommendations from the Trails Plan are being implemented. The plan includes a variety of recommendations to providing better management of the trails network and the Foothills Natural Area as a whole. Check out the website for more information on other initiatives in the works SLCTrails.com.

We are hoping to continue with development of a management plan, trail maintenance and some new trails as quickly as possible and as funding allows. The Department presents instructions and recommendations to the Mayor's office and the City Council, who will then resolves the funding to move projects forward.

What is the status of the new trail head projects?

Starting this summer, various trailheads will be updated with amenities like paved parking, fencing, landscaping, waste receptacles, dog waste bag dispensers, clearer entry plazas and trailhead information kiosks. Trailhead Improvements:

- **Victory Road:** Paved parking lot for 10-12 designated spaces, bike racks, invasive weed cleaning station and bike repair station.
- **Bonneville Blvd:** Marked parking for up to 50 designated spaces (including two ADA spaces), signage, event space, portable restroom, bike racks, and an invasive weed cleaning and bike repair station.
- **18th Ave:** Parking for 12-20 designated spaces (including one ADA space), bike racks, and an invasive weed cleaning and bike repair station.
- **Popperton Park:** New paved parking lot with up to 40+ designated spaces, signs, restroom, water fountains, crosswalks, picnic tables and benches, bike racks, an invasive weed cleaning station, street lighting, and shade structures.
- **Emigration Trailhead:** Graded and fenced parking for 15-20 designated spaces, invasive weed cleaning and bike repair stations.



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