

Enchanted Hills Addition, Tucson Mountain Park – Community Outreach and Response Summary

Prepared by the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program on behalf of the Pima County Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation Department



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The Enchanted Hills addition to Tucson Mountain Park includes 356 acres of scenic Sonoran Desert at the eastern edge of the Tucson Mountains. The property was acquired in 2016 as part of Pima County's open space management and preservation efforts. The Pima County Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation Department is proposing to construct approximately 7 miles of trails while closing and restoring over 4.5 miles of existing, unauthorized roads.

In 2016, the Pima County Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation Department (NRPR) partnered with the National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (NPS) to obtain community feedback about the county's trail proposal. A community outreach effort was undertaken from March to June 2017.

Approximately 30 people attended an open house on May 25, 2017. These participants completed 20 standardized feedback forms that contained 41 distinct comments. The results of this feedback are summarized below.

Highlights

Respondents were unanimously supportive of the plans put forward by NRRP for Enchanted Hills. Of those who completed feedback and offered explicit support or opposition, 100% (19 out of 19) supported the proposal. Only one respondent provided comments without indicating explicit support or opposition.

Comments in support of the plan highlighted the property's potential to complement the existing TMP trail system, support for restoration of natural resource damage on the property and the opportunity to alleviate current, undesirable activities.

While there was strong overall support, participants articulated several concerns. One respondent was concerned about the construction of new trails on a butte on the property that currently does not have existing trails. Another respondent indicated the need to mitigate user conflicts between mountain bikers and other users.

Residents in the Tucson Park West III neighborhood supported the plan but were generally opposed to a formal access point on the north side the Enchanted Hills property that would draw visitors and increase traffic. They encouraged improvement of access points on the south side (36th Street).

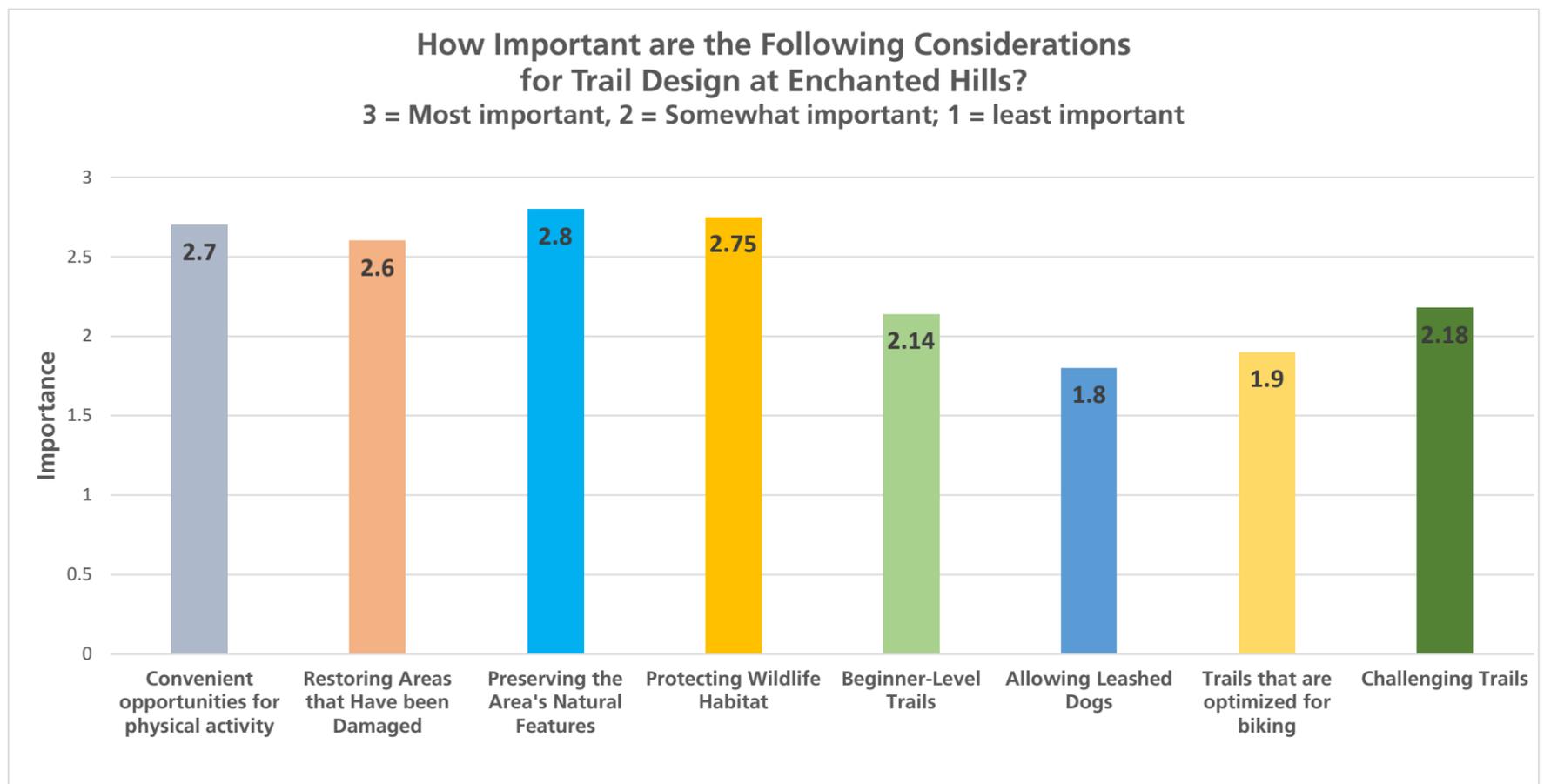
Most of the respondents were frequent users of Pima County parks and open space. Over half of all respondents (58%) indicated they use Tucson Mountain Park at least one or two times per week. Multiple users were represented including hikers, trail runners, equestrians, mountain bikers and dog walker. Of those who responded, hiking was the most commonly reported activity (12), followed by dog walking (4), mountain biking (3), trail running (1), and horseback riding (1).



Several commenters were concerned about the use of the 36th Street Trailhead for illegal and disruptive activities such as littering, natural resource damage, excessive noise, late night partying and off-highway vehicle use. Respondents encourage a greater presence from law enforcement and parks and recreation staff. Several were hopeful new trails and improvements would alleviate illegal activities.

Respondents offered mixed views on whether to allow dogs. Some respondents expressed negative feelings towards the proposal to allow leashed dogs. These comments cited pet waste and the low compliance rate of dog owners with applicable rules. Other respondents expressed support for allowing dogs. Allowing leashed dogs had the lowest average rating of importance (1.8 out of 3) of all eight provided options.

Participants were asked to identify the most important considerations from among 8 choices and rate them on a 1 to 3 scale (1= least important, 2 = somewhat important, 3 = most important):



Outreach Methods

A community open house was held on Thursday May 25th from 5:30 to 7:30 PM at Oyama Elementary School. The meeting was advertised widely through direct mailing to nearby residents and through a news release that resulted in media coverage from the Arizona Daily Star. Nearby neighborhood associations, recreational user groups (such as the Pima Trails Association and the Sonoran Desert Mountain Bicyclists among others), and nonprofits with an interest in recreation and open space were also contacted directly. Comments were accepted for approximately 30 days.

During the May 25 open house, a variety of informational materials were displayed related to the proposed trails, restoration actions and natural resource protection activities. Attendees were welcomed and encouraged to:

- sign in
 - review information boards
 - ask questions of Pima County and National Park Service staff
 - provide written comments on a standardized 1 page front/back feedback form (*right*)

Informational materials were also made available in Spanish. They were also posted online at the NRPR website following the open house.

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