

Painted Hills at 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



June 2017

The Painted Hills property at Tucson Mountain Park protects 289 acres of scenic Sonoran Desert in the middle of the Tucson metropolitan area. Situated within five miles of 160,000 Pima County residents, the property offers outstanding opportunities for recreational trail development that compliments the site's natural values. The property was acquired by Pima County in 2014.

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 develop a trail design plan for the property and obtain community feedback. A community outreach effort was undertaken from March to June 2017.

Approximately 55 people attended an open house on May 18, 2017. These participants completed 37 standardized feedback forms that contained 80 distinct comments. The results of this feedback are summarized below.

Additional partner organizations provided support for the open house including the Arizona Game and Fish Department, University of Arizona, Daquenes Health and the Tucson Cactus and Succulent Society. These organizations have also expressed their desire to help with future stewardship efforts.

Highlights

Respondents were **broadly supportive** of the plans put forward by NRRP and NPS for Painted Hills. Of those who completed feedback and offered explicit support or opposition, 84% (27 out of 32) supported the proposal while 16% (5 out of 32) opposed it. Six respondents provided comments, but did not indicate explicit support or opposition.

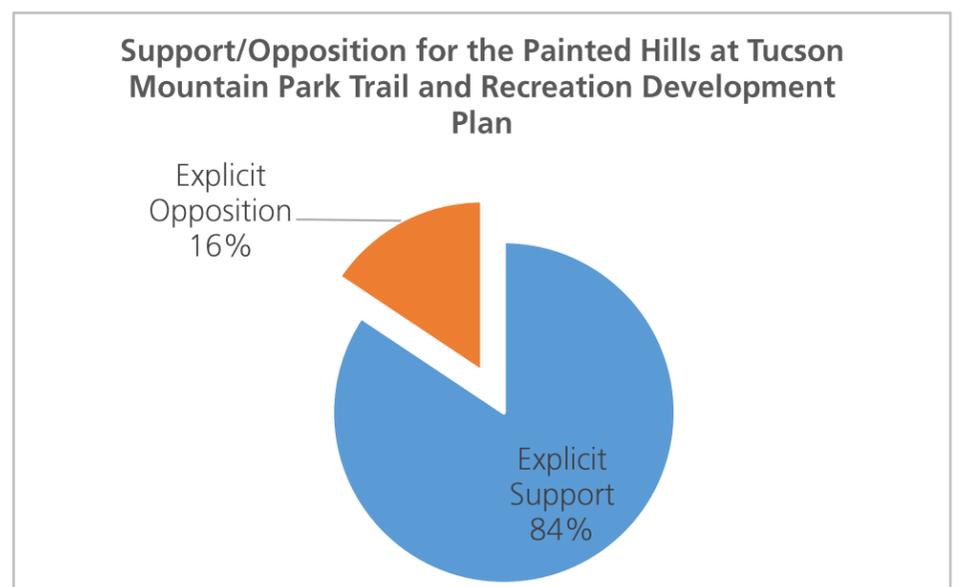
Respondents in opposition to the plan generally focused on the potential impacts of trail development and public use on the property's natural resources and wildlife. Comments in support of the plan highlighted the property's convenient location, overall need for more recreation opportunities and the benefits of outdoor recreation to health and wellness.

Most of the respondents were **frequent users of Pima County parks and open space**. Half of all respondents (50%) indicated they use Tucson Mountain Park at least one or two times per week. An even higher percentage – 63% - use other nearby parks and open space daily or weekly. 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 (21), followed by mountain biking (9), nature study (9), trail running (8), dog walking (6), picnicking (4) and horseback riding (1).

Respondents had **mixed views on whether to allow dogs**. Some respondents expressed strong negative feelings towards the proposal to allow leashed dogs. These comments cited pet waste, impacts to wildlife and conflicts with other users. Other respondents expressed strong support for allowing dogs. These comments cited the popularity of dog ownership and the lack of opportunities for dog walking in a natural setting. Allowing leashed dogs had the lowest average rating of importance (1.9 out of 3) of all eight provided options.

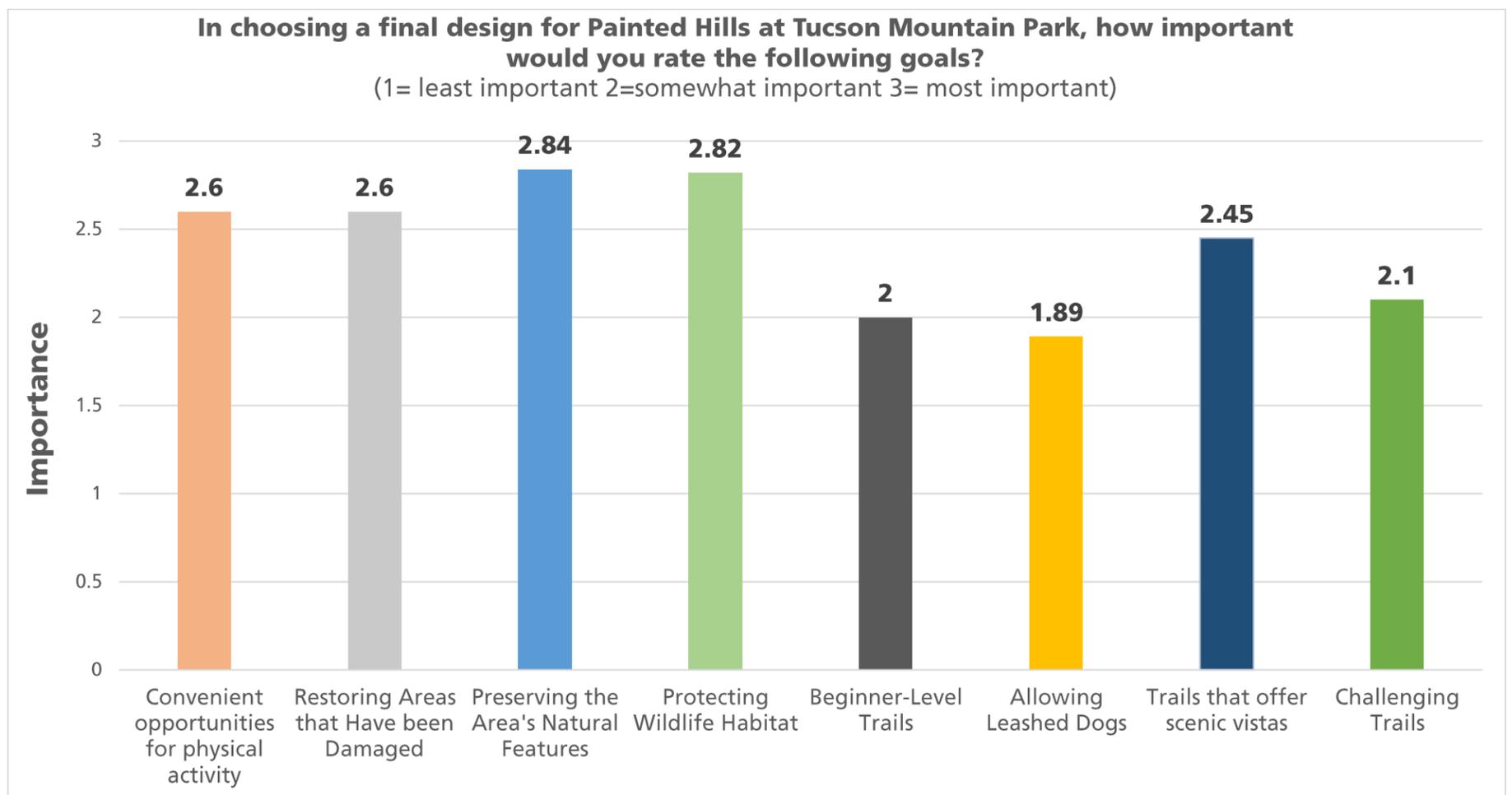
The **balance between natural area protection and recreation development** was a consistent theme throughout the outreach effort. It is reflected many of the feedback forms. Respondents encouraged NRPR to preserve wildlife and natural values of the property. Some respondents felt that recreational use of the property was incompatible with natural resource protection, while others indicated that the proposed plan achieved this objective successfully. Questions relating the protection of wildlife and the natural environment received the highest average ratings of importance (between 2.6 and 2.84 out of 3).

Numerous comments focused on the **level of parking and access** to Painted Hills, with most respondents indicating that the current planned trailhead access from Anklam Road may not be sufficient to meet future demand. Suggestions offered include an additional parking area on Speedway Blvd, an additional trail access point and/or parking area farther west on Anklam Road, and expansion of the proposed parking area.



Note: Explicit support or opposition determined by comments on standardized feedback forms. Comments such as "I like the proposal" or "Great design" constitute support, while comments such as "I am unhappy with the plan" constitute opposition.

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 18th from 5 to 7:30 PM at El Rio Neighborhood Center. 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.

During the May 18 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.

Before the open house, NPS staff had direct communication with several stakeholders and partners including the Tucson Cactus and Succulent Society, Tucson Clean and Beautiful, University of Arizona/Tumamoc Hill and others.

Project Contacts:

Pima County Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation

Steve Anderson – Planning Division Manager

Mark Flint – Trails Program Coordinator

National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program

Adam Milnor – Community Planner

Painted Hills at Tucson Mountain Park - Public Feedback Form

The Painted Hills property at Tucson Mountain Park protects 289 acres of scenic Sonoran Desert in the middle of the Tucson metropolitan area. The property was acquired in 2014 using funds from the Pima County open space bond program.

The Pima County Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation Department is proposing to develop a 4 mile system of recreational trails that would be accessed from a trailhead on Anklam Road. The proposed plan can be found online here: http://webcms.pima.gov/government/natural_resources_parks_and_recreation/

Project Contact: Steve Anderson Pima County Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation Department
steve.anderson@pima.gov or call (520) 724-5000

What do you think about the proposed trail and recreation plan for Painted Hills at Tucson Mountain Park?

How often do you visit Tucson Mountain Park?

Every day

1 to 2 times a week

Once a month

A few times a year

I do not visit Tucson Mountain Park

How often do you use other nearby trails or natural areas such as The Loop/Santa Cruz River Park, Tumamoc Hill, Sweetwater Preserve or Sentinel Peak?

Every day

1 to 2 times a week

Once a month

A few times a year

I do not visit nearby trails or natural areas

Painted Hills - Tucson Mountain Parks Trails and Recreation Development Plan Public Comments collected May 2017

Feedback Form Identifier	Name (If Provided)	Zip Code (if provided)	Email (If Provided)	Comment	Explicit General Support (S) or Opposition (O)
p1	n/a	85745		<p>I'm unhappy the there will be trails all, but it's not up to me. Taking this into account, there are my thoughts: If you build it, they will come...with their garbage! Any disturbance on the land introduced unwanted effects.</p> <p>Please do not allow horses (they damage trails and their poop does not get picked up). I've walked many trails in Saguaro National Park and horses' hoofs cause erosion.</p> <p>Most dog owners are irresponsible. They don't up dog poop even when pags are provided. Let them take their dogs to dog parks. Poop stinks!</p> <p>Only low impact activities should be allowed like walking with your own 2 feet. My 2 cents!</p> <p>(in response to interest in volunteer activities) None! The Pima County should be in charge of the listed activities.</p>	O
p2	n/a	857458		<p>I like the proposal to formally plan and construct new trails, especially family-friendly trails (wider) that allow fast hikers/dog-walkers to safely pass by slow, frequently pausing families like mine and our group.</p> <p>Loops are great.</p> <p>Designed stopping locations - pullouts could be great too.</p> <p>It could be difficulty to mix bicyclists with walkers on the same trail - perhaps could consider timewindows for bicycle use? I've seen that done somewhere.</p>	S
p3	n/a			<p>It looks very well thought out. Am glad to see open space being strongly considered. Currently do street weeks 5 to 6 times per week about 2 to 3 miles. This is close and will be well used.</p>	S
p4	n/a			<p>Looks good except for parking, maybe at SE end of perimiter trail - and, if it gets popular, some restrooms, water. Otherwise, Speedway is too narrow and the wide shoulders ru Anklam are "sort of" bike paths.</p> <p>Hope that the narrowness of the park i.e. between the 2 roads precludes hunting including bow hunting.</p> <p>Would be a good alternative to Tumumoc.</p>	S
p5	n/a	85745		<p>Trails can provide much needed outdoor experiences - but part of a quality experience is not having trails so dense that one has to view other hikers on nearby trails.</p> <p>Trails do have impacts on the habitat and all that exist there - Respect Them!</p>	
p6	n/a			<p>As a resident of the area who has always enjoyed the views when driving by, I worry about the upcoming changes. Glad you held this meeting to gather input. I propose not to build trails. Why build trails? You're just inviting more illegal dumping, increased traffic, headaches for us residents overall. Comparing T-Hill to Painted Hills is apples to oranges. The service road was not developed for walkers or other exercise.</p> <p>Don't allow dogs or horses.</p> <p>Cyclists already have many "playgrounds". Stop the nonsense!</p>	O

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p7	Diana Rhoades	85701	dianarhoades@gmail.com	I like it.	S
p8	Bruce Gungle	85745	bgungle@gmail.com	<p>Would love to have a plan for buffelgrass control here and at adjcant sites including Tumamoc, A Mountain and Pima College</p> <p>I would much prefer only the first segment of the trail out of the trailhead to be a wide walking trail, not the entirety of the southern segment. I think you are mistaken that it will replace Tumamoc Hill for walkers- it is too far out of town and will not have the elevational challenge that people find attractive. It's not worth destroying that area to find out it won't work as you hope.</p> <p>My wife couldn't make it but she would like it to be dog-friendly and minimal impact.</p>	O
p9	Gayle Hartmann	85719	gaylehartmann4@gmail.c	<p>The proposed trails look fine to me.</p> <p>My only that in all the country trails. On your trailhead signs, make it clear that bikers give right of way to both horses and humans on foot.</p> <p>Can you restore any existing roads that will not become trails.</p> <p>Thanks for all the good work!</p>	S
p10	n/a	85713		<p>Building smart trails is one thing. It's quite another to open those trails to adverse consequences. Dogs? Let's face it. People don't follow rules. In an ideal world world dogs would be on leashes and pet owenrs would pick up after them. NOT reality! Plus, we already know that dogs and wildlfie don't mix (ex. javelina attacks).</p> <p>Horses? A big NO. They cause a lot of damage to trails, not to mention that people would not want to get run over by them or stop on the feces (or smell it, same with dogs).</p> <p>Disturbing the ground will bring unwanted effects too: areas will be more prone to exotic and invasive species and they will attract more people to discard their trash all over the property. Without enforcement, this will be yet another problem for the County to deal with. Keep it simple.</p> <p>Also, keep in mind that though you may thnk you are building 2 - 5 ft wide trails, theyw ill widen automatically with use. The Painted Hills area is beautiful and it's a pity that it can't just be enjoyed from a distance. It is important in building the community's trust that when you say on a poster board that you are "conservaing open space and protecting nature" that you really do taht. The area is already so built up and with many other places to recreate, I hate to see this piece of land sacrificed. I'm sure there is more I want to say!</p>	O
p11	Patrik McKiernan	85745		<p>Fantastic!</p> <p>Please try to provide western egress/exit on Anklam so that the trail can more easily be incorporated into larger rides that span multiple trails connected together. Camino de Oese trailhead is not far from the western side of the new, proposed area.</p>	S
p12	Tracey Horner	85745	tracey_horner@hotmail.com	Please provide trail access on western side preferably from Anklam Road.	
p13	Andrew Meyer	85745	cyclefiend1123@gmail.com	Great, just down the street from my house! Would love to help build trail	S

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p14	Laura Meyer	85745	laura.w.meyer@gmail.com	Wonderful. Great to have beginner trails.	S
p15				The plan looks as though a lot of thought was put into the layout. Protection of wildlife corridors, trail sustainability and points of interest were considered. Thanks for all the excellent work on the design and also on all the work on the existing trails in the park network.	S
p16	Evan Pilling	85716	ekpilling@hotmail.com	I am in support of any additional trail opportunities, especially those that include mountain bikes. The 21-car lot will not be big enough. It would also be good to have parking on both Anklam + Speedway. Also good to look at ways to connect to Sweetwater Preserve. Great job on the trails layout!	S
p17	Dan Hensbrag	85745	desealdan6@outlook.com	Looking forward to the usage. Should open up trails as sections are completed. Like that existing dirt roads will be utilized. Would oppose dogs on trail - people won't put grocery carts back let alone pick up after their animals. In addition, dog traffic will affect our wonderful wildlife that visit our neighborhood on a daily basis.	S
p18	n/a			I'm excited about the addition - it'll provide an option to Tumumoc Hill and Sentinel Peak ("A" Mt), especially to those whom like to take their 4-legged friends with them. Preserving our natural resource must be a priority! These areas promote elevated mood, sense of place, social connections and overall health & wellness.	S
p19	Art Ruiz	85745	atby@aol.com	I like the plan. I believe there needs to be some additional parking besides the one lot for 15 cars + perhaps some parking on Speedway? Where possible it would be nice to have a few seating banks or benches.	S
p20	Michael Duer	85719	sunradolphy@yahoo.com	Seems like a nice addition that I will probably use from time-to-time	S
p21	Al Gilpatrick	85745	al.gilpatrick@gmail.com	Great design. I would suggest bike racks at parking lot trailhead & access point on Speedway. Speedway is major bicycle route & planned improvements (this summer) include a bicycle lane similar to Anklam.	S
p22	Paul Jehle	85745		I talked with Steve; he showed me the proposed plan & it looks fine to me! It's great we preserved Painted Hills in the first place! Hopefully the trails will be as inconspicuous as possible.	S
p23				I love the trails - good planning - takes into account all users. Shared use is great. Roads can be used as trails too	S
p24				Great idea, please make it happen. Please allowed leashed dogs for trail users. Porta potties please.	

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p25	Ester M. White	85735	emw2011@comcast.net	Wonderful there is a new section. The trails look good.	S
p26	Patricia Townsend	85745	townsend.pat@gmail.com	Great addition to the current trails.	S
p27	n/a	85745		Looks good to me. Pleased to see this.	S
p28				Awesome idea! Glad we were able to save this & looking forward to seeing it implemented. Plan looks good - love to see a mix of trail that is MTB friendly - some easy - some difficulty. Great asset - thanks.	S
p29	Gene Joseph	85705	gj@lithops.com	Great place - great trail + recreation concept - because of the few miles of trail, people encounters will be more (than Sweetwater) so signage addressing trail protocol is important.	S
p30	Matthew Nelson	85736	matthew@aztrail.org	Excellent proposal with low density trail construction + easy access from the city. Love the scenic vistas, which give residents a sense of pride of place. Parking is well-located; I recommend a secondary parking access location to minimize congestion at a single location or mitigate potential user conflict. Pima County does an outstanding job w/ trails and open space and this is a proposal I have been looking forward to since I lived at 4500 W Speedway Blvd (Speedway + Anklam) for over 10 years.	S
p31				I would use both the main trail + perimeter circle for hiking. A composting toilet is needed for the park. No privacy along proposed trails.	S
p32	Todd Keller	85745	tbkeller@hotmail.com	Keep up the good work building trails! Please consider connecting to Starr Pass trail system by trail. Any chance to incorporate connection to and multi-use (cycle) of the Feliz Paseos park?	
p33	Randy Accetta	85719	randy@runtucson.net	A great community use of our public lands. Support the proposed trail 100%	S
p34				The property should allow folks to be able to take their dogs with them when they go out hiking. There are too few trail systems in the greater Tucson area that allow dogs on trails. Mountain bikers should be allowed although 4 miles is not much of a challenge for them.	
p35	n/a	85743		It is a great start. Please make sure dogs are allowed on leash. Many of us walk with our dogs and there are so few natural open spaces where we can do so. This park is not wilderness as it is surrounded by roads and this does not hold to the argument of keeping dogs out due to wilderness values. Please allow dogs and those of us love them to use this area.	S
p36	n/a			I'm so happy that it will be a hiking and natural area. I love that I can take my dogs.	S
p37	n/a			I'm so glad it will be a hiking and natural area instead of housing complex. I do think recreation and hiking is important and I recreate a lot but I do think it needs to be balanced w/ environmental + wildlife concerns. Actually, I think wildlife/wildland concerns are more important than recreation. Thanks!	

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p38	Benjamin Wilder, University of Arizona		bwilder@email.arizona.edu	<p>I am actually fairly concerned with the plans to make the Painted Hills a high usage public trailed system. This comes from several perspectives. First, the area within fairly close proximity to Painted Hills actually has a number of already established and diverse public recreation areas including A Mountain, Tumamoc, Feliz Paseos Park, and the Yetman trail. Essentially, there already in this area already exists a park for a broad swath of different use types. Also, while as I mentioned we are looking to be more welcoming to walkers at Tumamoc and I agree that an outlet for some of the walking traffic at Tumamoc is a good thing, in thinking about this more I really feel that this outlet should be A-Mtn and not Painted Hills. Why are we investing in converting a beautiful and intact track of desert land, probably the most important wildlife corridor remaining from our property to the Tucson Mountains, into another recreation area? Why can't we invest some of that money and effort into bettering the existing sites at Tumamoc, A-Mtn and the others I listed? There are already related efforts underway at A Mtn with Tumamoc not far behind. I know that there is a jurisdictional issue here and this is County land and A-Mtn is City, but this is alleviated to a large degree at Tumamoc given the shared management between UA and Pima County.</p> <p>I am also extremely concerned by the idea to open up the Painted Hills property to pets and/or dogs. This would in my mind be to the significant detriment to the healthy ecosystem that still exists on this property.</p> <p>So given time to reflect on this and to see the excellent opportunities coming on-line at the same time between A-Mtn and Tumamoc Hill, in addition to the sites that already exist, I am left with the strong feeling that the best use for Painted Hills goes more in the direction of a functioning wildlife corridor than an intensive trailed park. Rather, let's harness the opportunities at hand and build up what we already have. It is an exciting time with a lot of people and different jurisdictions looking in the same direction. I am excited to work with you in these efforts and look forward to more discussions about the best way to enhance and preserve the natural and public resources we have.</p>	O