

# MALIBU PARKS PUBLIC ACCESS ENHANCEMENT PLAN

*City of Malibu*  
*Local Coastal Program Amendment*

FOR

**CHARMLEE PARK  
RAMIREZ CANYON PARK  
ESCONDIDO CANYON PARK  
CORRAL CANYON PARK**



**SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY  
MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY**

**MALIBU PARKS PUBLIC ACCESS ENHANCEMENT PLAN  
CITY OF MALIBU LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM AMENDMENT**

September 2007

For

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**CHAPTER 2: CONTEXT FOR PROPOSED PLAN****2.0 PLAN AREA**

The proposed Plan area encompasses public parkland as illustrated in Figure 2, including Charmlee Park at the westernmost portion of the Plan area, and recreation areas that extend from Zuma/Trancas Canyon Park to Corral Canyon Park at the easternmost portion of the Plan area, south to Pacific Coast Highway and just north of the City of Malibu/Unincorporated Los Angeles County Boundary. The Plan area includes Charmlee Wilderness Park, the Zuma/Trancas Canyon Units of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, Ramirez Canyon Park, Escondido Canyon Park, Solstice Canyon Park, and Corral Canyon Park. Public parklands that are owned and maintained by the National Park Service; the Zuma/Trancas Canyon Units of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and Solstice Canyon Park, are included in the Plan to allow for comprehensive and strategic planning for developing trail connectors with the goal of establishing a network of parks, trails, and open space for public use. Therefore, priority trail linkages to trails already established or planned in Zuma/Trancas Canyons and Solstice Canyon Parks are addressed in the Plan; however, the Plan does not discuss in detail the existing conditions and facilities or future plans of the National Park Service for these parklands. The Plan focuses on establishing trail and transit connections to the National Park Service parklands, in addition to trail, transit, and park-specific improvements proposed for Charmlee Park, Ramirez Canyon Park, Escondido Canyon Park, and Corral Canyon Park.

Private property addressed by the Plan consists only of those properties located in the Plan area subject to OTDs or those identified on the Conservancy's Work Program, as may be amended, which are purchased from willing sellers, dedicated to public use as part of the entitlement process, or donated by a private landowner. Neither the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy nor the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority have any land use regulatory or zoning power. No entity must obtain a permit or other entitlement from the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy or Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority to develop private property. Inclusion of a privately owned parcel within the Plan area does not mean that the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy has any land use regulatory or zoning control over that property. Land use regulation and zoning control over private property will remain unaffected by the Plan and will remain with the City of Malibu, County of Los Angeles, or California Coastal Commission, as the case may be.

**2.1 PARKLANDS AND FACILITIES****2.1.1 Charmlee Park**

Charmlee Wilderness Park is regionally significant parkland consisting of approximately 530-acres of coastal land located within the City of Malibu and County of Los Angeles (Figure 2). The Park property is primarily located along a ridgeline and coastal plateau, flanked to the west and east by Lechuza and Encinal Canyons which descend to Pacific Coast Highway. The Park is accessed from Encinal Canyon Road approximately one-mile north of the intersection of Pacific Coastal Highway and Encinal Canyon Road.



Once a working ranch and later subject to a number of failed residential and golf course proposals, the greater part of Charmlee Wilderness Park encompasses land area acquired by the County of Los Angeles with support of the California State Parks Bond Act of 1964 and the Federal Open Space Land Program, with some additional land areas donated by private land owners. The County dedicated the park as Charmlee Regional Park in 1981. Ownership of the park was subsequently transferred to the City of Malibu and on June 19, 2003, the City rededicated the park as Charmlee Wilderness Park.

Charmlee Park consists of expansive open and undeveloped habitat areas and a variety of park amenities. The portion of the park property located within the City of Malibu is designated and zoned as Public Open Space (OS), while the balance of the property located in Los Angeles County is designated Parks and Rural Land I (1 unit/10acres) and is zoned A-1-1, Light Agriculture (Figures 3 and 4).

## Park Facilities

Charmlee Wilderness Park contains a number of recreational support facilities including public parking, individual and group picnic areas, a restroom, a Nature Center and educational displays, sitting benches, and approximately 8 miles of hiking trails. The Park currently offers amenities for visitors with mobility disabilities in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act including restrooms, parking and picnic areas. An onsite staff residence is located adjacent to the Nature Center. A water tank supplied by the County of Los Angeles Water Works District is located within the park and provides the water source to support existing park amenities. Various fire roads exist which also serve as hiking trails.



## Programs

Charmlee Park is owned and maintained by the City of Malibu which operates a number of public education and recreation programs at the park. Program opportunities include, among others, visits to the Nature Center on weekends, full moon and wildflower hikes, "Bug Nights", a variety of public hikes and interpretive programs, and astronomy nights. The Nature Center offers displays on Chumash history, geology, local flora and fauna, the park's history as a working ranch, and other subjects. The Charmlee Docent Program operates in conjunction with the City of Malibu Parks & recreation Department and includes an extensive



outreach effort to local and non-local elementary school children. The program accommodates school field trips and nature hikes reaching more than 1000 students and teachers each years.

## Natural Resources

Charmlee Wilderness Park is home to a variety of habitats including chaparral, coastal sage scrub, oak woodland and grassland. Various pocket areas of disturbance along the trail network are evident however the majority of the property contains significant stands of native plants. As such, the entire park property located within the City of Malibu is designated as an Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area in the City of Malibu LCP (Figure 5). In addition to the considerable native habitat resources onsite, the locale of Charmlee Park provides sweeping views of the Malibu coastline and Pacific Ocean, the Channel Islands on a clear day, and the Boney Mountain Ridge of the Santa Monica Mountains.



## Planning/Permitting History

Upon County acquisition of Charmlee Park the Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation Department began planning for park improvements and initiated the permitting and environmental review process to develop a number of park support facilities including the park entrance road, public parking, service and fire roads, a park headquarters and interpretive center, picnic areas, group and family camp areas, an information center, hiking trails, a service yard and service building. A Final Environmental Impact report was prepared for the proposed improvements and the County submitted a coastal development permit application to the Coastal Commission in August 1978 for the proposed improvements. Coastal Development Permit P-9-6-78-4039 was issued in January 1979 for the described improvements but with a slightly reduced scope and scale. To-date, only a portion of the approved improvements have been constructed including the park entrance road, public parking, service and fire roads, the interpretive center (the Nature Center) and caretakers residence, picnic areas and hiking trails.

### **2.1.2 Ramirez Canyon Park**

Ramirez Canyon Park is located in Ramirez Canyon off the Malibu coastline and is bordered by National



containing existing unofficial trails and consisting of disturbed habitat areas. Grading and removal of native vegetation on the hillside terrain will be required in some areas; however, the alternative trail alignment would substantially reduce the amount of grading required to construct the trail connection and thereby greatly reduce long-term maintenance requirements. The trail has been designed to follow the contours of the terrain to the maximum extent feasible to minimize grading and vegetation removal. Impacts to native vegetation will be mitigated onsite consistent with the requirements of ESHA Implementation Measure 7.

The proposed trail alignment descends into Corral Canyon where a natural, informal stream crossing exists and provides access across the creek to an old burn-out site (proposed for campsite improvements, discussed below). This section of the trail connection will require trail improvements with the riparian corridor of the stream and will thereby result in impacts to riparian habitat which will be subject to a number of Resource Protection policies and implementation measures of the Plan, the Malibu LCP and the Coastal Act. From here, the public gains access to the Corral Canyon loop trail, the park's trailhead and parking facilities, and seasonal beach access to Dan Blocker State Beach.

### Public Transit Improvements

To minimize vehicular use in the Plan area and still adequately provide for visitor access, Transportation Policy 1 provides for expansion of the Park Link shuttle service as an alternative means for gaining access to parklands and for assisting disabled visitors. The Park Link Shuttle Program currently provides public transportation to Corral Canyon Park and Solstice Canyon Park, generally running from 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. in the spring and summer, and 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in the fall and winter, with stops occurring approximately every hour at each park (Figure 6). The shuttle service provides free or low-cost bus transportation for people who otherwise would not have access to parklands and beaches. The proposed Plan includes an expansion of the shuttle service to include shuttle stops at the existing public parking facility at Winding Way and Pacific Coast Highway presently providing pedestrian access to Escondido Canyon Park, the proposed new parking facility at Escondido Canyon Park, and the proposed parking facility adjacent to Kana Dume Road which will provide hike-in access to Ramirez Canyon Park and Zuma/Trancas Canyon Park. Bicycle parking and storage facilities will also be provided at all new parking facilities in the Plan area to encourage biking over vehicular access to trail park access points.

In addition the City operated Point Dume Nature Preserve Shuttle Program provides public transportation between Westward Beach and Point Dume State Park. The Point Dume shuttle generally operates on weekends, holidays and during the summer months running every 20 minutes between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. The City's shuttle service is proposed to be expanded to include Charmlee Park and Corral Canyon Park. Together, the extended Park Links and Point Dume shuttle services areas will create a network of alternative transportation opportunities linking coastal and inland trails, parklands and beaches.

### Charmlee Park

In cooperation with the City of Malibu, the proposed Plan incorporates policies and implementation measures applicable to the new camping and expanded support facilities proposed for Charmlee Park. The proposed park improvements are intended to provide for new hike-in camping opportunities, increased accessibility and a slight expansion of existing support facilities. Charmlee Park has a number of public



amenities that currently support public use of the park including a public parking lot, restroom facilities, drinking and water resources, various picnic areas including a fully accessible picnic area, a Nature Center, an onsite staff residence, and miles of fire road access/trail resources.

The Plan provides for development of one new accessible camp area adjacent to an existing picnic area and in proximity to accessible parking and restrooms as illustrated on project plans prepared by Penfield & Smith (Figure 10). The proposed accessible campsite location provides spectacular views down Encinal Canyon to the Ocean and can readily be accessed to and from existing support facilities. The Plan proposes to expand the existing pad of a day-use picnic area to accommodate the accessible campsite and connect the two use areas thus preserving the existing picnic area and providing for expanded opportunities for accessible day use and overnight camping. Expanding the existing pad for this purpose will require vegetation removal and cut/fill grading to achieve the grades and level surface area necessary to facilitate accessibility to and within this amenity.

The Plan provides for development of 7 hike-in trail camps located in two primary camp areas (Figure 10). The proposed campsite opportunities at Charmlee Park are readily accommodated in that the sites can be located in proximity to existing support facilities and primary access points, requiring little in the way of infrastructure improvements to support the use, but are also secluded enough to provide a sense of separation from development. Charmlee Park is rich in habitat and although the proposed camp improvements are located in previously disturbed areas, some native vegetation removal will be required. The Plan policies and implementation measures applicable to the proposed improvements therefore include a number of development standards to ensure consistency of the proposed development construction with the resource protection provisions of this Plan.

One camp area is planned within an abandoned parking area located just north of the existing parking facility to accommodate 4 hike-in campsites. Given the previous use of this area as a parking lot, the area is relatively level and little grading would be required to develop the 4 campsites. Also, because this camp area is located in proximity to the existing parking lot and restroom facility, no new support facilities are required to support the campsites. City Park staff have indicated; however, that future park users and campers would benefit from an additional source of water as the park currently has only one drinking fountain and one outdoor water valve available. As such, the proposed Plan includes development of an additional water valve for public use.

3 additional hike-in trail camps are proposed along a fire access road that provides access to the Park's water tank (Figure 10). The proposed camp area has experienced substantial recent disturbance and the area is presently void of significant native vegetation. The proposed camp sites in this area will require grading; however, the sites have been located in gently sloping areas adjacent to and on either side of the existing fire access road. The campsites will also be supported by existing park facilities; however, because they are further removed from the primary trailhead a self-contained portable restroom is also proposed.

Finally, City staff has further expressed an interest and need to provide additional parking resources in conjunction with implementing the proposed campsite improvements. Therefore, additional public parking resources are proposed via an expansion of an existing bus parking/turnaround area (Figure 10). Expansion of the existing bus parking area will require vegetation removal and cut/fill grading to achieve added level surface area to provide for approximately 5 additional parking spaces.



All of the proposed camp and restroom improvements are located adjacent to existing vehicular access points or a fire access road and within relatively level areas and therefore are easily accessed for maintenance purposes. In most improvement areas existing vegetation will serve to screen and buffer the proposed trail camps and additional planting efforts will be implemented to provide buffer areas for the trail camps, in which case appropriate native vegetation will be used.

Given the shared responsibility of the Conservancy/MRCA and the City that would result from implementation of the proposed camp improvements, the Plan provides that an operational and maintenance agreement for the facilities and uses of Charmlee Park be developed. The operational and maintenance agreement will address onsite management and monitoring responsibilities of the Conservancy/MRCA for camp uses, and may also include provisions for shared resources dedicated to staffing the park, and overall trail and facility maintenance.

A biological evaluation was conducted within Charmlee Park (Draft Biological Resources Letter Report and Impacts Analysis, Dudek 2007) to site and evaluate the potential campsite locations in association with available facilities, infrastructure and resource constraints. Campsite and facility improvement locations were chosen in coordination with City staff and based primarily on their proximity to existing support facilities, within previously disturbed areas, and/or adjacency to existing facilities.

### Ramirez Canyon Park Improvements

The proposed Plan contains a number of policies and implementation measures addressing specialized programs at Ramirez Canyon Park intended primarily to address issues related to neighborhood compatibility. The policies and implementation measures specifically provide for specialized programs and use of the property and its existing facilities to facilitate unique access opportunities for disabled visitors, educational opportunities, to provide for essential administrative support, and to allow for limited events and group gatherings typically permitted and accommodated in State Parks. The policies and implementation measures further specifically address potential neighborhood compatibility issues with strict limitations and requirements related to traffic, noise, and potential exposure to natural hazards and trespassing on private property.

Programmatic proposals for Ramirez Canyon Park were, for the most, addressed and approved pursuant to the coastal development permit (CDP 4-98-334) approved and issued by the Coastal Commission on February 5, 2001. The proposed Plan includes these same programs with modifications to decrease the intensity of use of the park associated with special events and to slightly increase public outreach and educational programs. The specialized programs included in this Plan for Ramirez Canyon Park, limitations, and special provisions for program implementation are as follows:

**Public Outreach Programs** designed to provide access and recreation opportunities primarily for disadvantaged youths, physically challenged visitors, and seniors to be conducted year round, seven days per week from 8:00 a.m. to dusk. The programs will be provided at no cost to the participants and free or low-cost transportation utilizing vans or small transit buses.

**Riparian area Interpretive Trail and Picnic Facilities** designed specifically to provide facilities and amenities required for the safe use of the trail by physically challenged in compliance with Americans