



Valley Water

Clean Water • Healthy Environment • Flood Protection

Public Trails on Valley Water Lands – Policy Criteria and Guidance

December 17, 2020

Tonight's Agenda

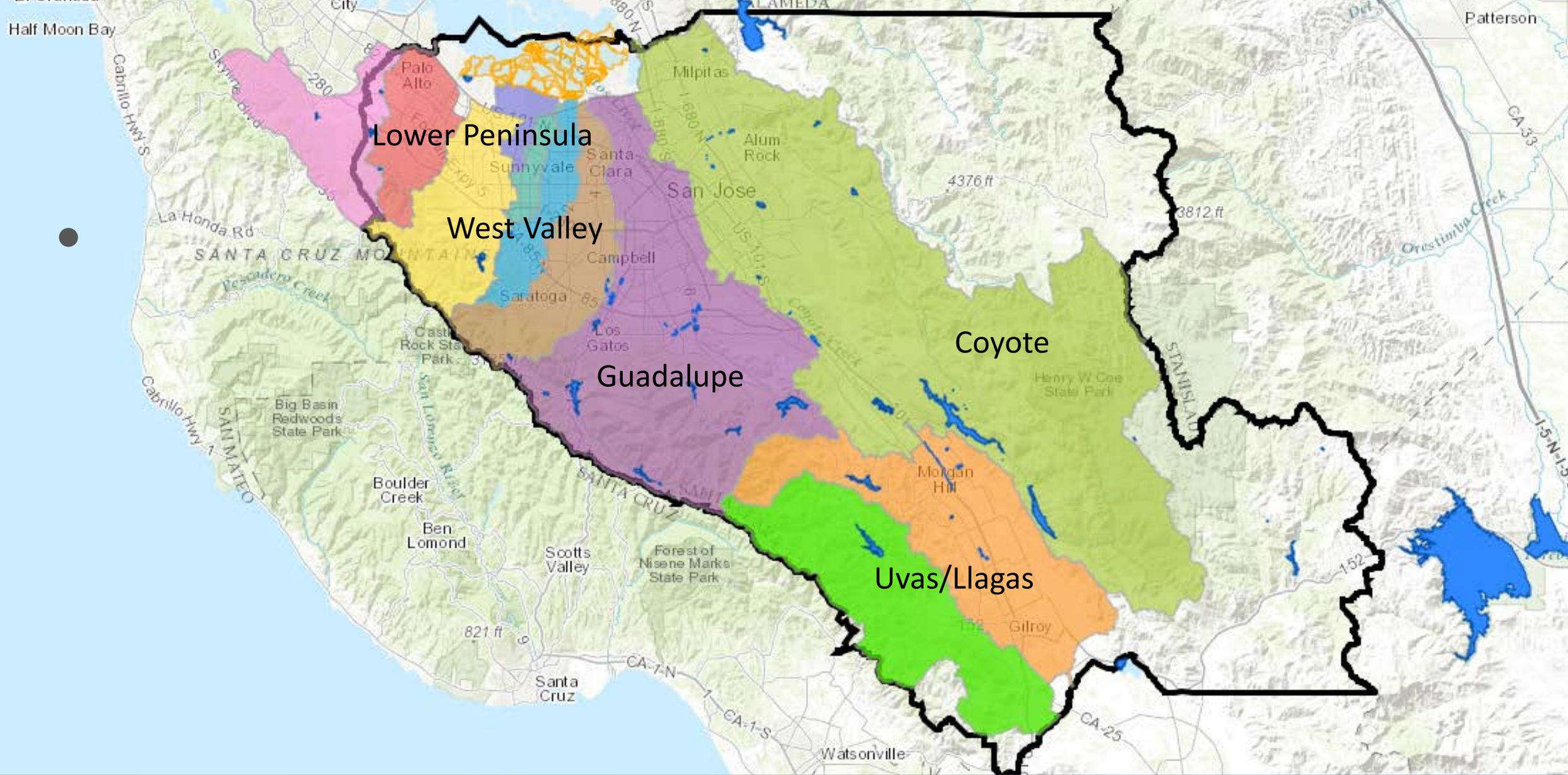
- Valley Water Mission
- Current Policy
- Need and Objectives
- Criteria
- Guidance
- Comments and Questions
- Next Steps



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**YOUR
INPUT IS
NEEDED**

Take our survey now



Valley Water Does Not Plan, Construct or Operate Trails.



Over 40 miles of trails are constructed on Valley Water Lands, and about 60 miles are planned.

Valley Water provides

A young girl with curly hair is drinking water from a public fountain. The image is framed in a blue circle.

Clean water

A stone dam structure is built across a river, with water flowing over it. The image is framed in a green circle.

**Flood
Protection**

A stream flows through a lush green forest. The image is framed in a green circle.

**Environmental
Stewardship**



Water Supply



Flood Protection



Stewardship

Valley Water Supports Trails and Access to Open Space

- Grant Funding
- Clean Safe Creeks
- Safe Clean Water



Safe, Clean Water
and Natural Flood Protection



Safe, Clean Water
and Natural Flood Protection



Safe, Clean Water
and Natural Flood Protection

Valley Water Supports Trails and Access to Open Space

- One Water Plan:
 - Countywide Framework
 - Watershed Plans



Valley Water Supports Trails and Access to Open Space

District Act

Resolution 72-44: Recreational Use

Resolution 74-38: Joint Use



What is compatible?



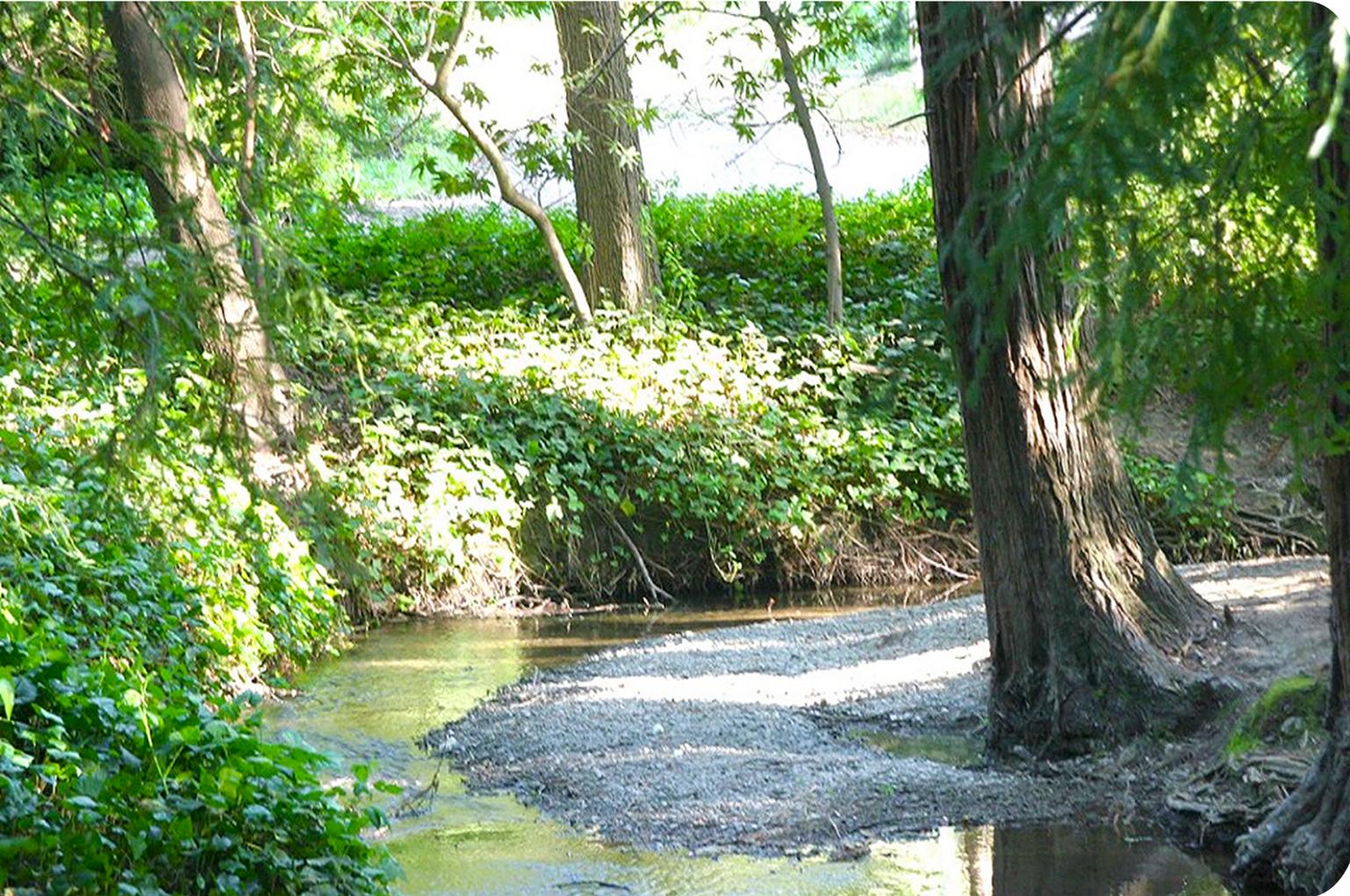
- Water storage
- Levees and floodwalls
- Flood flow capacity
- Aquifer recharge
- Mitigation



- Sediment Removal
- Levee and Bank Repair
- Vegetation management



- Water Quality
- Habitat Protection
- Restoration and Enhancement



Goals of the Public Trails Policy Criteria and Guidance

- Provide clear standards to evaluate trails projects
- Clarify roles and responsibilities of Valley Water and Partner Agencies
- Define a collaborative process

Trails Policy Criteria and Guidance: Timeline



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Spring/Summer



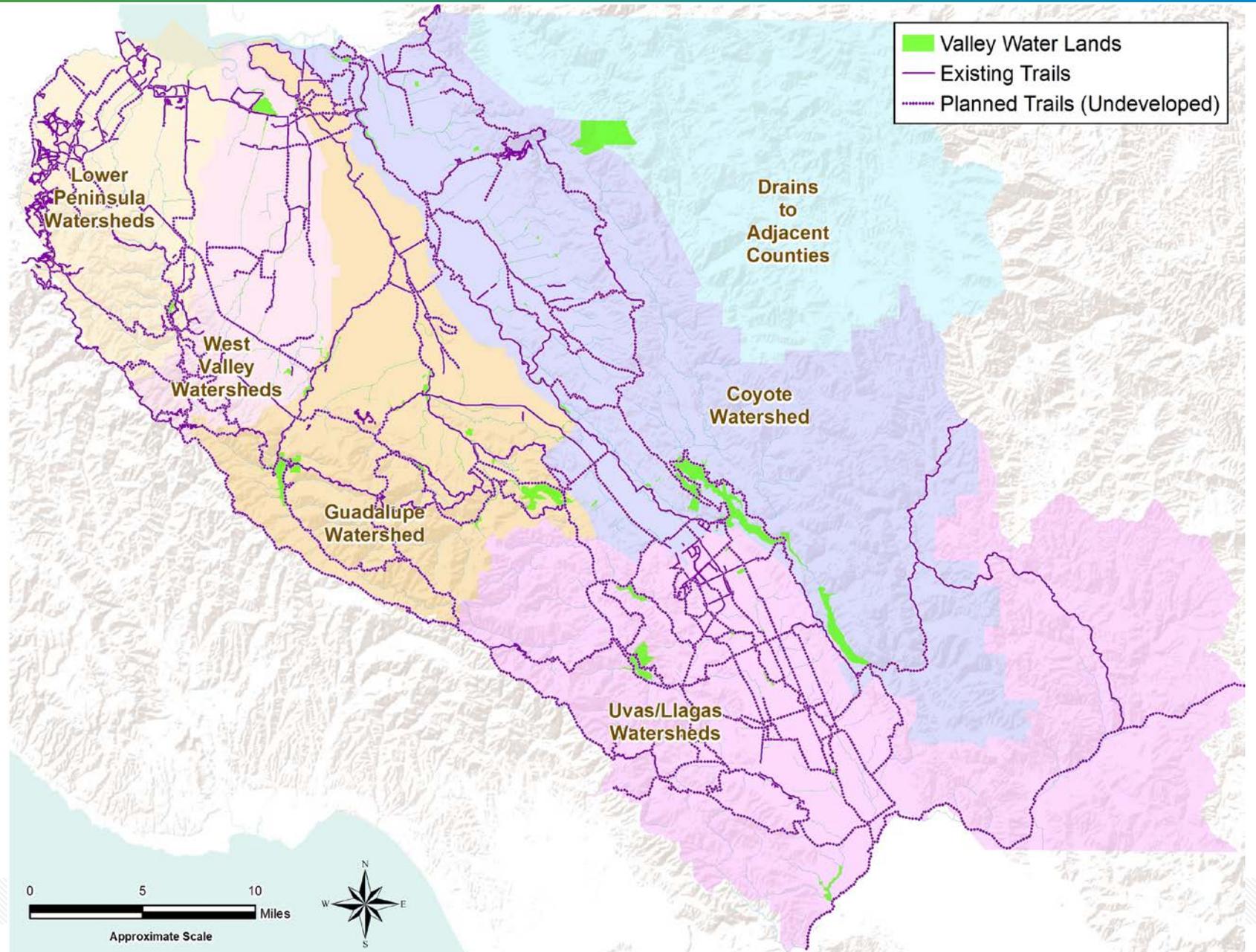
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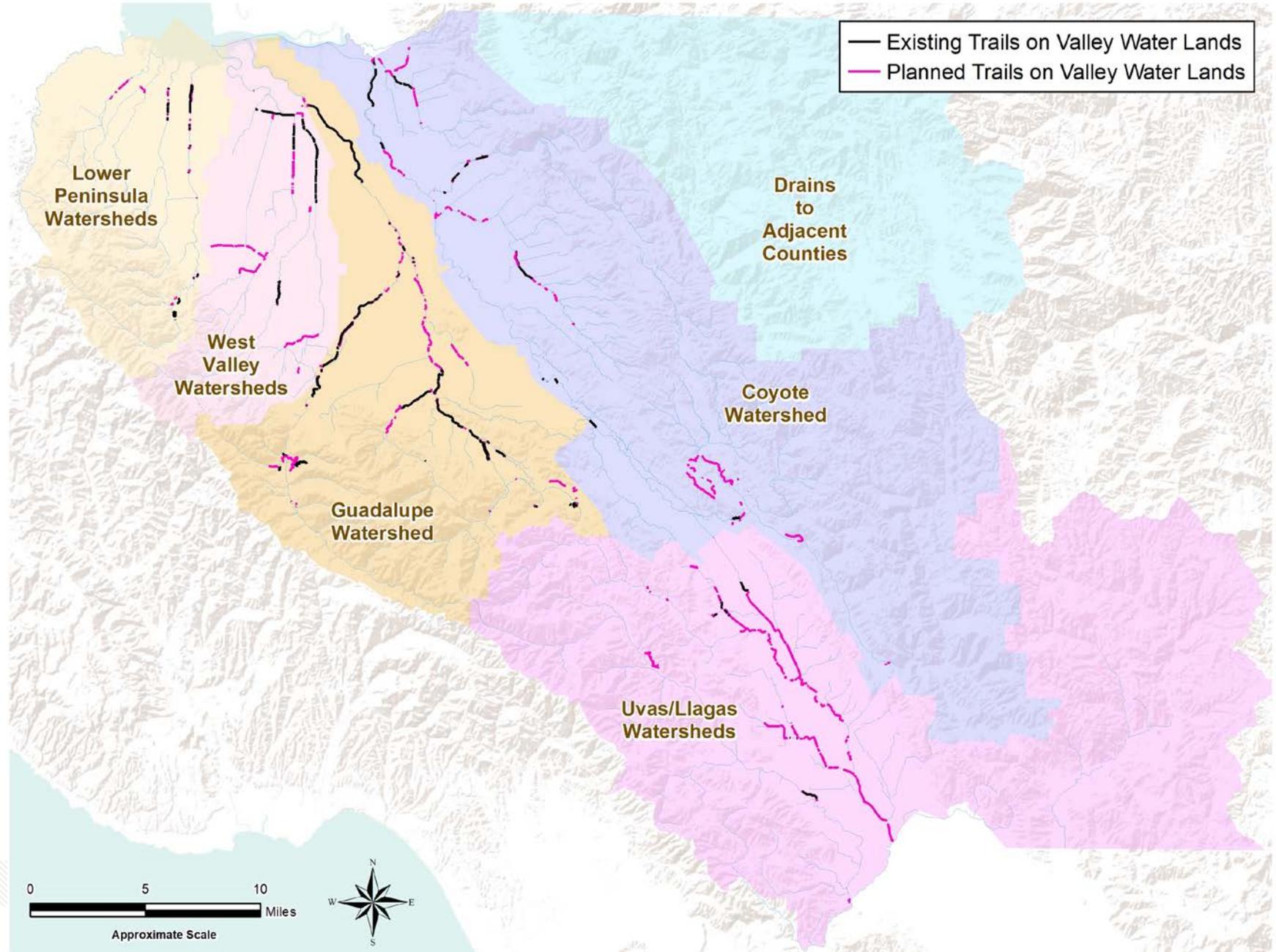
- What Lands are Covered by Joint Use Agreements?
- What are the Criteria and Guidance for Evaluating Trail Projects?
- Will Joint Use Agreements for Trails Change?



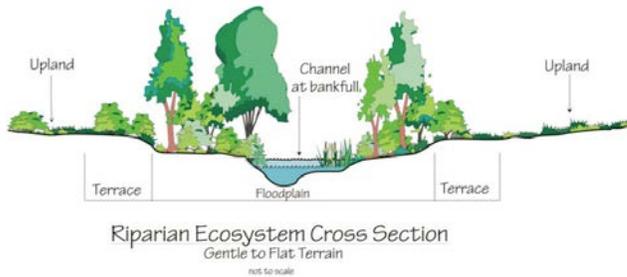
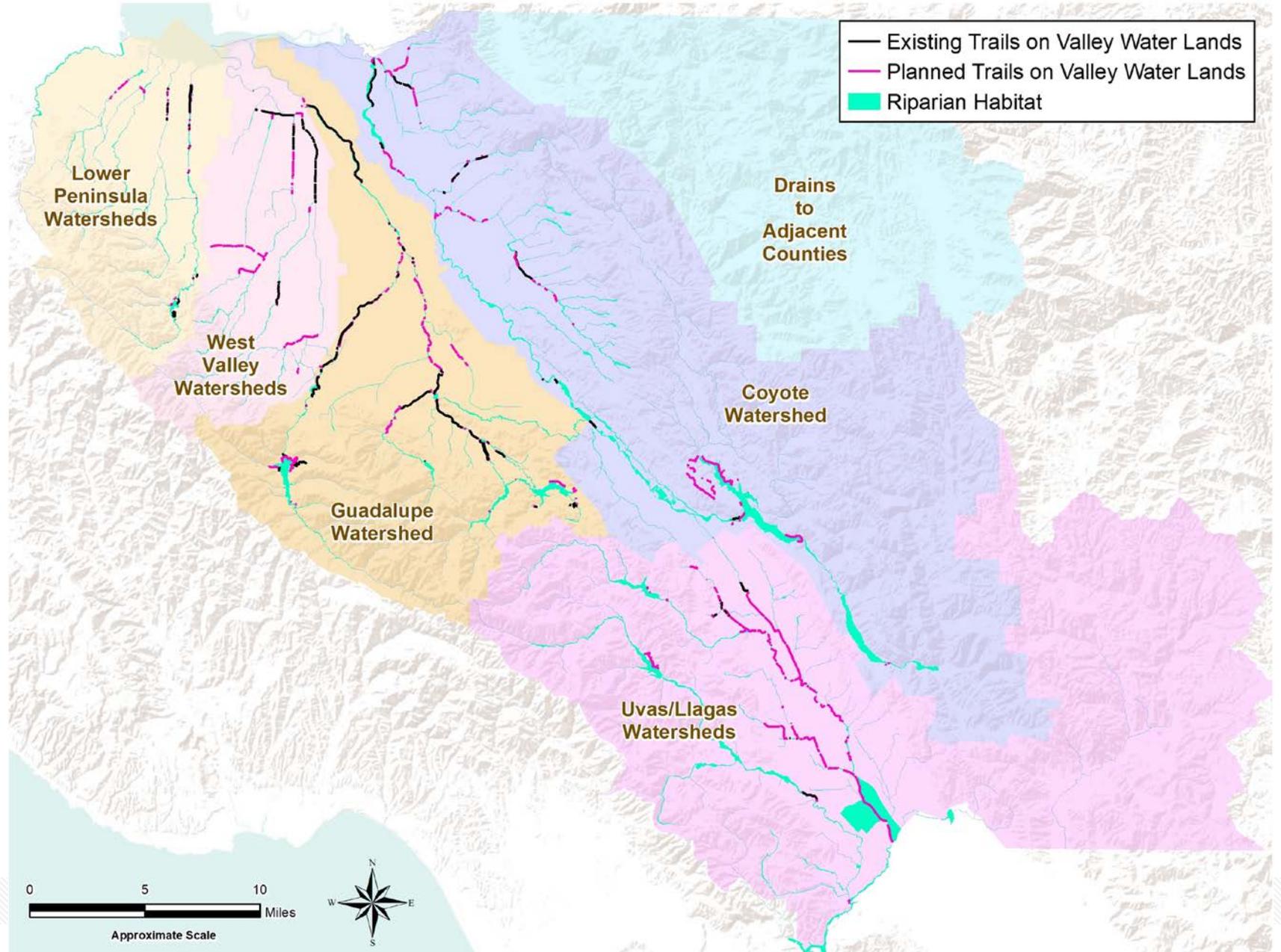
Existing and Proposed Regional Trail Connections in Santa Clara County



Joint Use Agreements Apply only to Trails on Valley Water Lands



Existing and Proposed Trails on Valley Water Lands located within mapped Riparian Habitat



Status of Riparian Habitats along Santa Clara County Streams

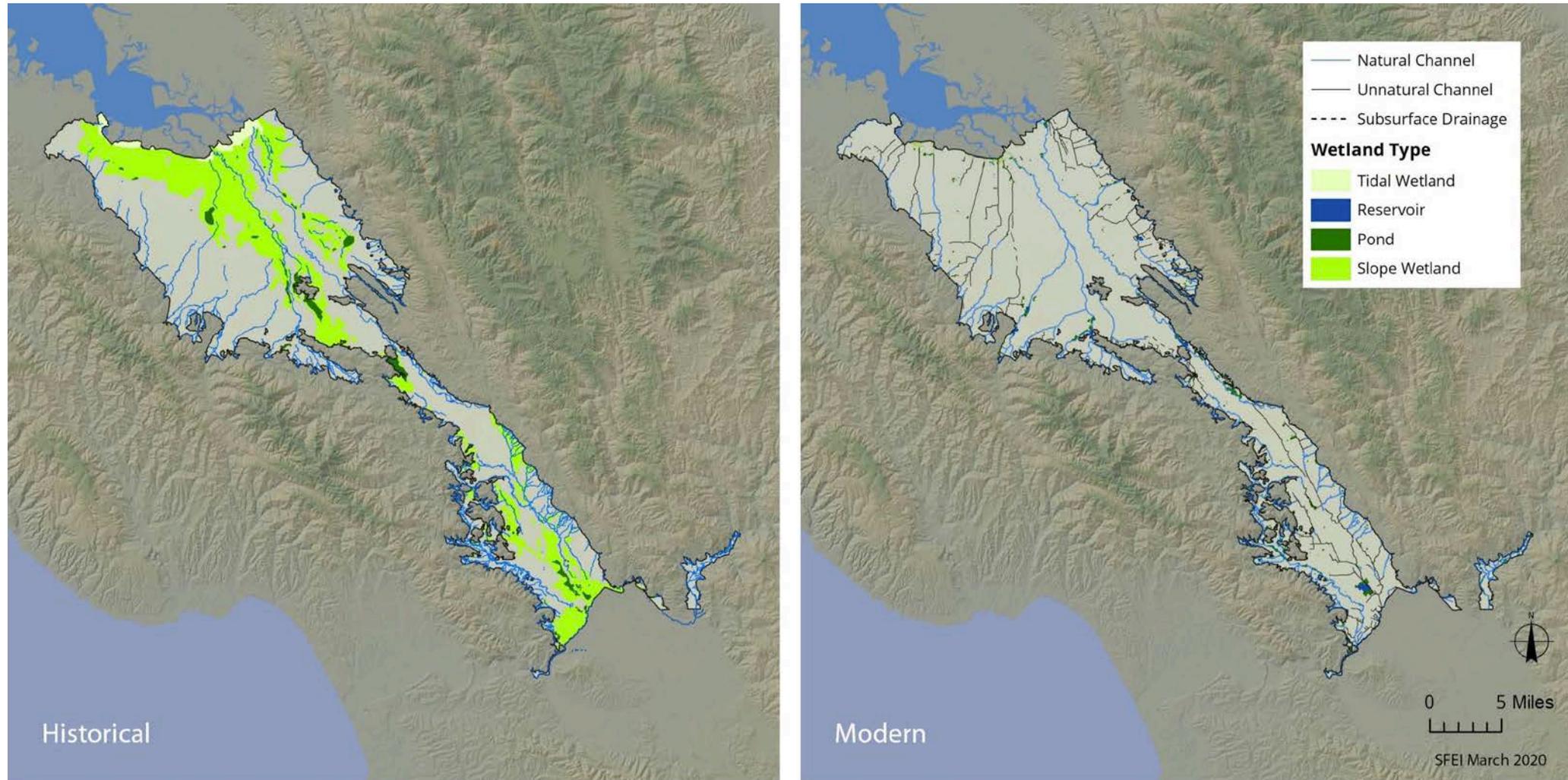
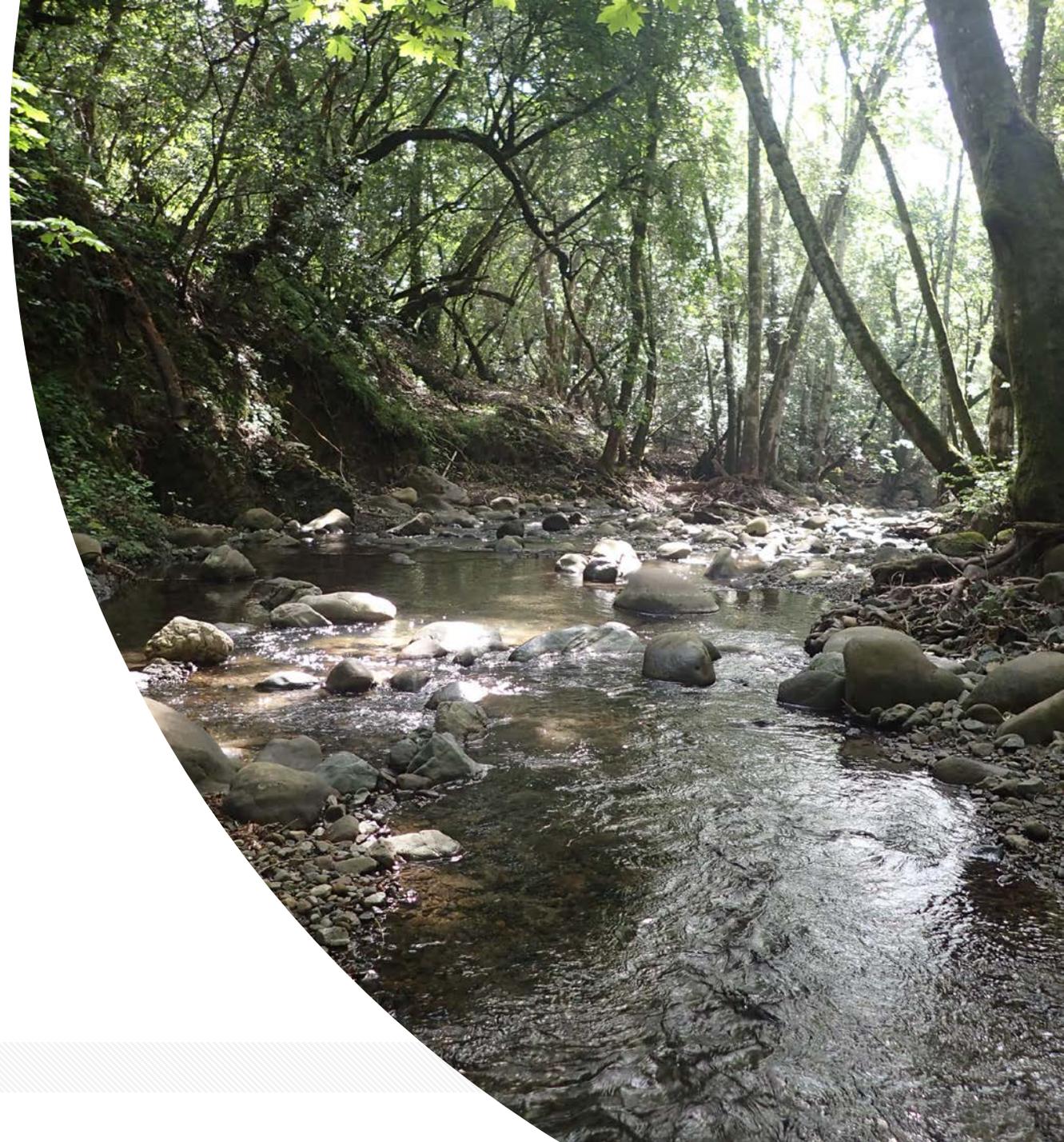


Figure 9. Map of the historical (circa 1850) and current (circa 2008) aquatic resources in the Santa Clara valley floor for which there is overlapping historical GIS data.

Unique Qualities of Riparian Habitat

- Filters pollutants and sediments from entering the creek
- Tree roots stabilize creek banks preventing erosion and maintaining channel structure
- Tree canopy shades the creek maintaining lower water temperatures needed to support aquatic insects, fish and amphibians
- Trees and shrubs provide food, cover and nesting sites for animals
- Cobble and soils allow for groundwater recharge





Importance of Riparian Habitat to Preserving Biodiversity

- San Francisco Bay Area is a hotspot of biodiversity within CA and the US
- 80% of all animals use riparian resources and habitats at some life stage
- 50% of breeding birds nest in riparian habitats
- Many endangered, threatened or rare species use SC County Creeks



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We Ask A Great Deal of Our Creek Corridors



Convey flood flows to
SF Bay



Locate Utilities
(electricity, water,
sewer, fiber optics)



Habitat for Wildlife



Provide flows to
Percolation Ponds to
Recharge
Groundwater



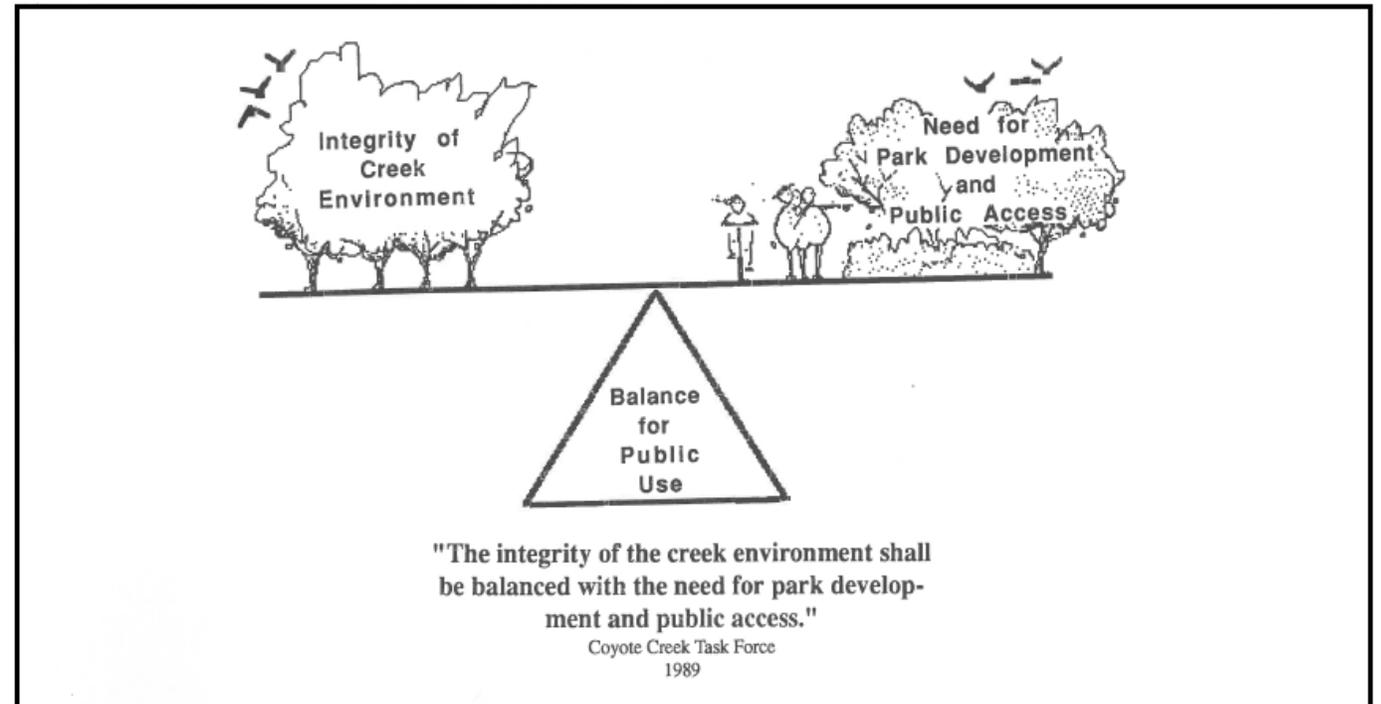
Space to Respond
to Climate Change

Background of Trails for Recreational Use

- The first trails were developed primarily for recreational use and passive in nature.
- Concepts reflected in early projects and trail master plans.

Los Gatos Creek Trail Master Plan goals:

- Preserve and restore natural creek environment, and
- Provide pedestrian and bicycle access for community and regional recreation



Potential Biological Impacts of Trails

Direct Impacts



- Loss of Habitat
- Fragmentation of Habitat and Wildlife Corridors
- Decreased Suitability of Habitat to Support Special Status Species
- Tree Removal



- Loss of VW Mitigation Opportunities
- Reduction in Carbon Sequestration through Tree Loss

Indirect Impacts



- Reduction in Nesting
- Increased Predation and Parasitism
- Vegetation Trampling, Erosion and Sedimentation
- Trash and other Pollutants

Trail Stats

- Approx. 40 Miles of Existing Trails on VW lands
- Approx. 59 Miles of Proposed Trails on VW lands based on Countywide Trails Master Plan
- Approx. 38 of these Miles are within Riparian Habitat
- 67 Active Joint Use Agreements with 14 Public Agencies



The Easy Trails Have Been Built!

Many of the Remaining Creekside
Locations are Highly Constrained



Trail Benefits

- Access to open space and natural environment for urban residents
- Provide off-street regional trail routes benefiting a broad range of users
- Support alternative transportation reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Maintenance to address illegal uses
- Potential for more community partnerships to enhance environmental stewardship



Trail Design Challenges

- Must not reduce or restrict access for Valley Water maintenance and operations
- Must avoid or minimize direct and indirect impacts to plant and animal communities from construction and daily trail use
- Must not alter flood flows, increase erosion or diminish creek bank stability
- Must maintain water quality



Trail Criteria and Guidance to meet existing Valley Water Policy

1. Planning and Public Outreach
2. Flood Protection
3. Valley Water Operations
4. Habitat Protection
5. Trail Maintenance and Security
6. Water Quality
7. Channel Stability
8. Regulatory Compliance



Policy Criteria Planning and Public Outreach

Partner Agency is responsible for conducting:

- Public Planning Process
- Community Outreach
- Stakeholder Engagement



Policy Criteria Flood Protection

Trail Projects must not:

- Reduce existing or design levels of flood protection
- Adversely affect existing FEMA flood mapping,
- Increase flooding or the frequency of flooding.



Policy Criteria Valley Water Operations

Trail Projects must not limit or constrain Valley Water access to maintain and operate its facilities.



Policy Criteria Valley Water Operations

- Sediment Removal
- Maintaining Native Plant Mitigation Sites
- Erosion Repair
- Vegetation Management
- Trails must be designed to withstand access by heavy equipment.



Neighborhood Work 2017
Calabazas Creek Sediment Removal
Santa Clara Valley Water District

What: The Santa Clara Valley Water District will remove sediment from Calabazas Creek in the cities of Sunnyvale and Santa Clara. Crews will use excavators, dump and crew trucks and small loaders. Expect typical construction noise and dust during work hours.

When: September to November*
Work hours are 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday and possibly Saturdays in case of delays.

Where: Between Tasman Drive and upstream of Highway 101.

*Project start dates and duration may vary due to site conditions and equipment availability.

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For more information on the District's Maintenance Program, visit the CA Water & Power website at www.valleywater.org.



Policy Criteria Habitat Protection

Trail Construction and Use must not result in serious or major disturbance to biological resources, including aquatic, riparian and wetland habitats, and the streamside ecosystem.

- Sensitive Trail Siting and Design
- Maintain Native Tree Canopy
- Protective Design Features
- Enhancement of Existing Habitat





JUA Application requires:

- Biological Resources Assessment
- VW Habitat Protection Criteria may not align with CEQA thresholds or other state and federal permitting regulations
- Trail Projects may clear CEQA and not be suitable for development on Valley Water lands



Policy Criteria Trail Maintenance and Security

Maintenance, patrolling, and management of the trail is at the sole cost and responsibility of the Partner Agency. JUA Application requires:

- O & M Plan and a Commitment to Fund these costs for the life of the trail
- Partner Agency to remove a trail for Flood Control Improvements

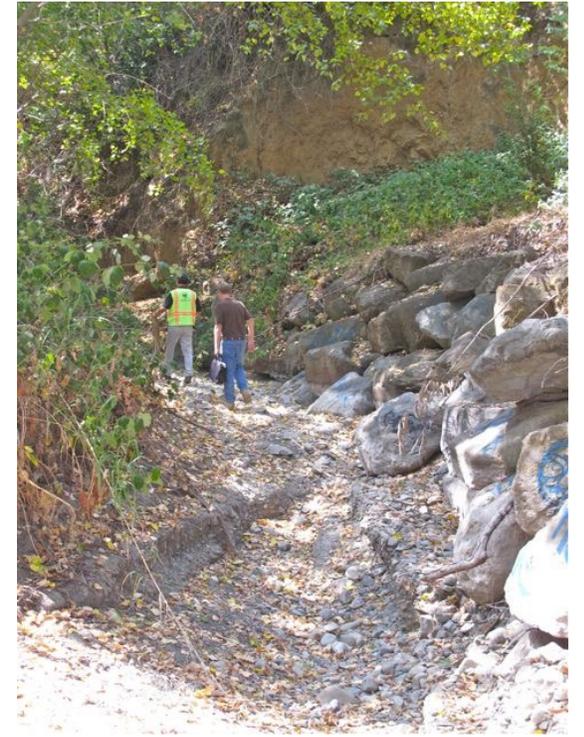


Policy Criteria

Channel Stability

Trail Projects, including any in-channel features, must not adversely affect channel bank or bed stability or cause or exacerbate existing erosion problems.

- Trail Ramps and Underpasses
- Pedestrian/Bicycle Bridges
- Restoration Structures



Policy Criteria

Water Quality

Trail Projects must be designed to:

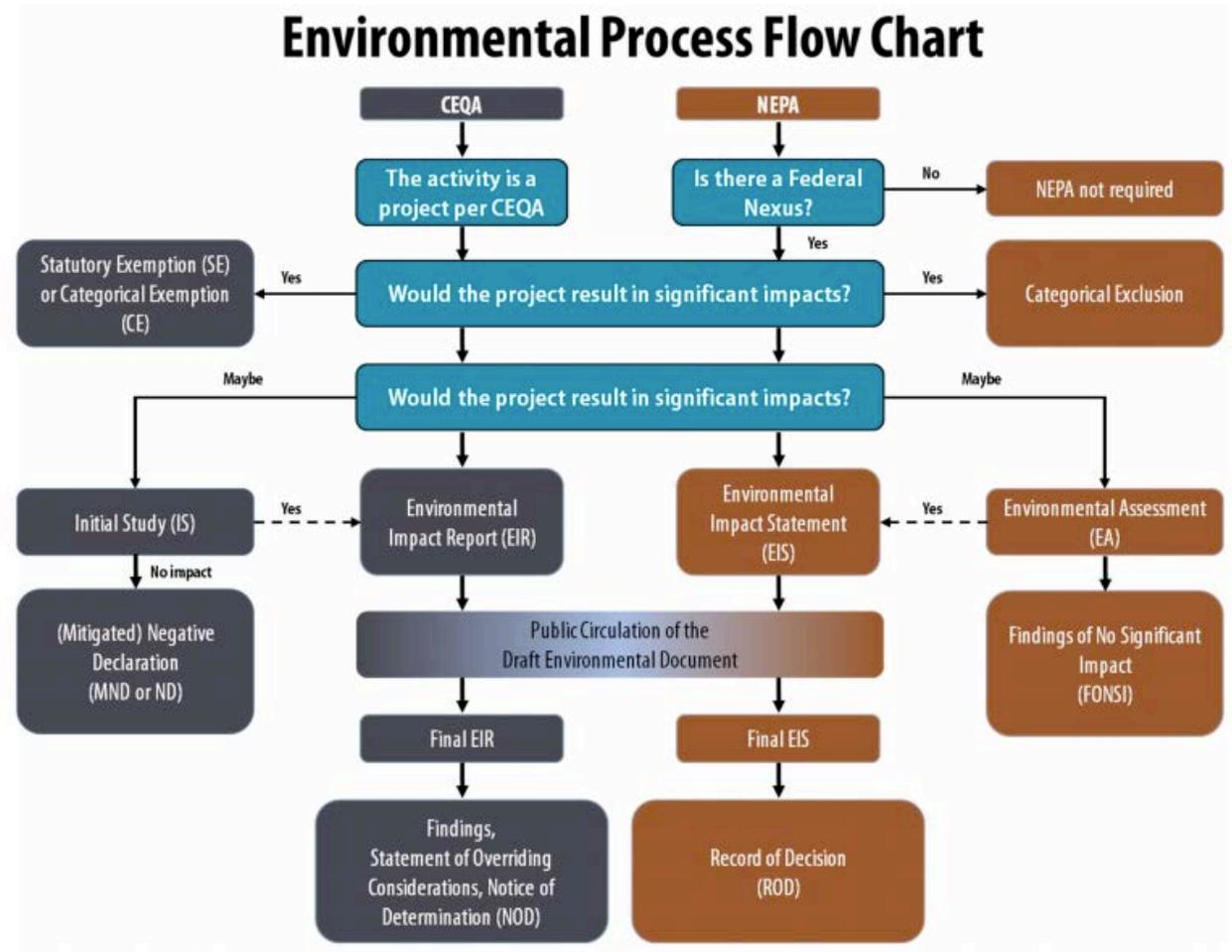
- Minimize erosion
- Reduce the flow of pollutants, including trash and litter, into the creeks



Policy Criteria Regulatory Compliance

Partner Agency is responsible for:

- Environmental review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)
- Obtaining all necessary regulatory permits



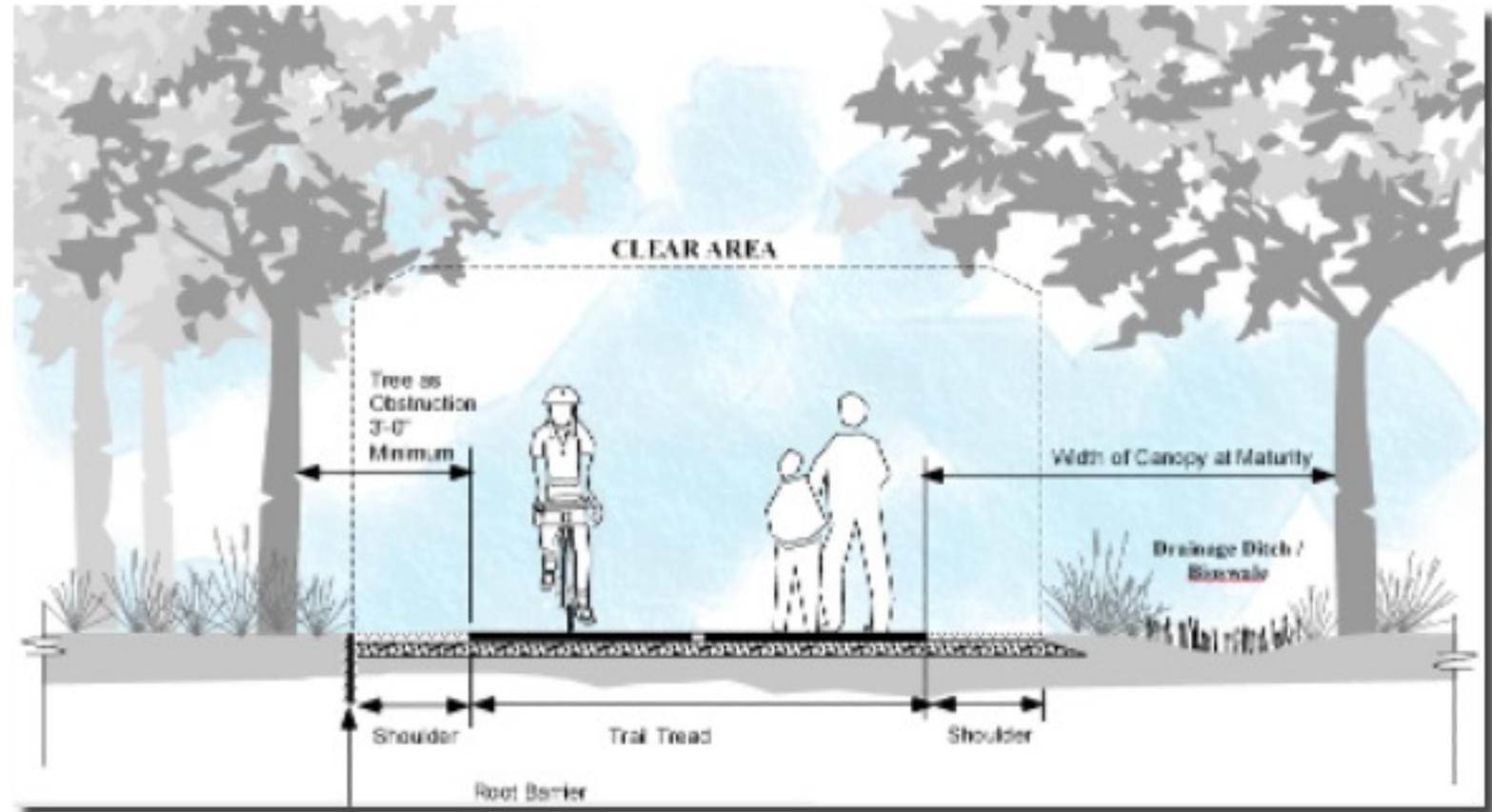


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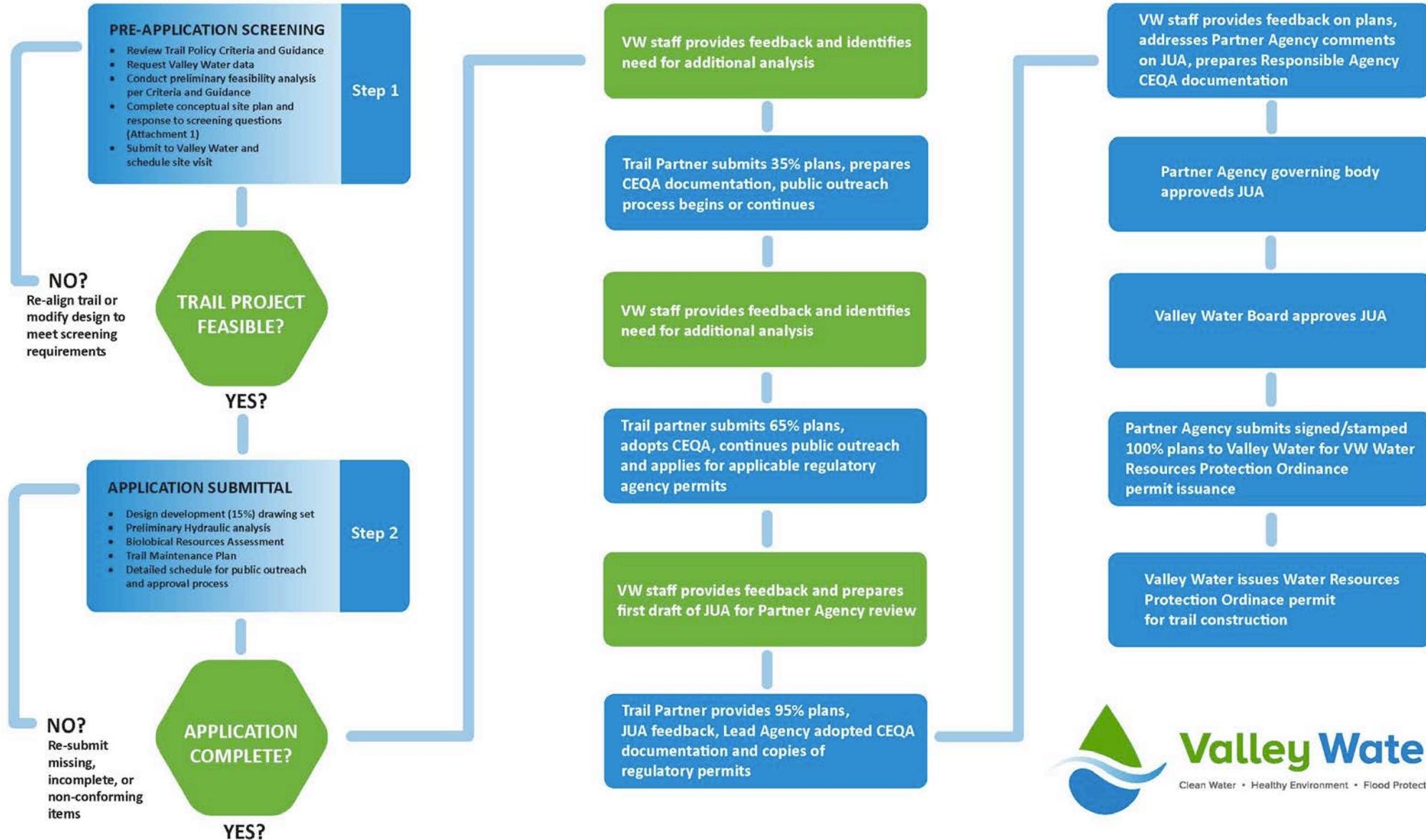
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Trail Policy Guidance

The Guidance is written to minimize subjectivity and therefore aids both the Partner Agency and Valley Water staff in developing the Joint Use Agreements required for development of Trail Projects on Valley Water property.



Trail Project Joint Use Agreement and Permit Process



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Step 1 – Trail Project Screening Requirements

- Concept Site Plans indicating trail alignment, engineered structures (bridges, underpasses and ramps, overcrossings, etc.), trailheads, etc.
- Typical Trail Cross-sections w/ surfacing materials
- Project Description including project goals and trail planning history and public outreach
- Statement about Design Efforts to Avoid Impacts to Valley Water Operations and Maintenance
- Description of Anticipated Habitat Impacts
- History of Prior Trail Maintenance and Capacity to Perform in Perpetuity
- Anticipated Environmental Review and Permitting



Step 2 – Joint Use Agreement Application

- Construction Plans - trail alignment, engineered structures (bridges, underpasses and ramps, overcrossings, etc.), trailheads, etc.
- Typical Trail Cross-sections with surfacing materials
- Biological Resources Assessment – estimate of tree and shrub removals, filling of wetlands or waters of US, impacts to listed species
- Hydraulic Analysis for trail features located below the top of bank
- Trail Maintenance Plan w/Commitment of Funding
- Summary of Public Outreach
- Adopted CEQA Documentation



Trails Policy Criteria and Guidance: Next Steps



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Spring/Summer



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Questions and Comments?

Input and Updates

www.valleywater.org/trails-policy

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