



CHAPTER 4 DESIGNATIONS AND CLASSIFICATIONS

4.1 DESIGNATIONS AND CLASSIFICATIONS

Road and Trail Designations

Roads and trails at TASP are identified as either “system” or “non-system.” System routes are those recognized and maintained as State Parks facilities and are further designated as either roads or trails.

System routes are designated as roads if they were constructed to allow street-legal vehicle access or currently accommodate street-legal vehicles. At TASP, system roads within the park are open for non-motorized recreational uses and include Canyon Trail, Warren Richardson Trail, the far western portion of Lawndale Trail, the southern portion of Two Quarry Trail, Pig Flat Trail, and portions of Ridge Trail. Channel Drive is a designated system road that provides public vehicular access. Although it is not formally designated for trail use, it is regularly used by hikers and bicyclists as part of the public roadway.

State Parks trail designations include a subcategory for “trails on roadbeds,” which include trails on roadbeds that are no longer passable by vehicles. This subcategory is useful to track the location and condition of old roads being used as trails. In TASP, portions of Cobblestone, North Burma, Rough-Go,

Orchard, Quarry, Lawndale, and Marsh trails are located on roadbeds.

System routes are designated as trails if they were not originally constructed to allow street-legal vehicle access and currently don’t accommodate street-legal vehicles. At TASP, the remainder of the routes in the formal system are designated as trails.

Non-system routes are not officially named, are not included as State Parks facilities, and are not maintained by State Parks. Within TASP, most non-system routes are user-created and/or remnant historic trails and roads, such as access roads from quarrying in the park in the early 1900s. Select non-system routes in the park include those that were previously within the recreational trail system but were closed and decommissioned due to resource impacts or other reasons.

Use Designations

System roads and trails are assigned use designations to identify allowed trail users. By default, all trails are open to pedestrians and closed to other uses unless designated otherwise by the District Superintendent. Below is a

summary of the trail use designations within the state park system (State Parks 2019).

- **Hiking trails:** Open to pedestrian use only
- **Bicycle trails:** Open to pedestrians and bicyclists
- **Equestrian trails:** Open to pedestrians and equestrians
- **Multi-use trails:** Open to pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians
- **Accessible trails:** Trails with any use designation that meet department and U.S. Access Board accessibility standards

At TASP, most system trails in the park are designated as multi-use trails (Figure 1-1). Only two of the trails in the park are hiking trails (hike only)—Steve’s “S” Trail in the Richardson Zone and Rhyolite Trail in the Lawndale Zone.

In response to the growing popularity of electric bicycles (e-bikes) as a form of recreation and commuting, State Parks adopted a statewide policy in 2021 to address their presence within the California State Park System. E-bike- use in state parks is authorized through a District Superintendent’s order, in alignment with the statewide policy. State Parks’ e-bike policy can be found here: www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=30521. Currently, none of the trails within TASP allow e-bike use.

The use of all other electric-assisted, electric-powered, and motorized recreational devices is prohibited on all trails throughout the park, unless specifically used as a mobility device associated with a disability.

Trail Classifications

State Parks assigns trail classifications to create a hierarchy of trail significance. For example, trails that provide connectivity between visitor facilities and to destinations are more significant than trails that have dead ends or traverse lesser used portions of a park. Through a point-based evaluation process, State Parks assigns trails to four classes: Class I through IV (Table 4-1). Class I trails are the most significant and have the highest design, construction, and maintenance standards. The standards for Class II, III, and IV trails diminish consecutively. Maintenance and rehabilitation projects are also prioritized by trail classification—Class I trails receive higher priority than Class IV trails. For additional information on trail classifications, see Chapter 2 of the California State Parks Trails Handbook (State Parks 2019).

Most trails in TASP are Class I trails. There are select Class II trails, including a majority of Steve’s “S” Trail, Schultz Trail, and the southern portion of Rough-Go Trail. Class III trails in the park include Rhyolite Trail and the northern portion of Steve’s “S” Trail. There are no Class IV trails in the park.

Table 4-1 Trail Classifications

Trail Classification	Overview	Use Designations	Design Standards
Class I	Trails close to developed visitor facilities (e.g., interpretive trails from a visitor center)	▪ Accessible/interpretive trails ▪ Hiking trails (hike only) ▪ Bicycle trails (hike/bike only) ▪ Equestrian trails (hike/horse only) ▪ Multi-use trails (hike/bike/horse)	▪ Native or hardened tread surface ▪ Includes the most robust trail structures for resource protection and visitor safety
Class II	Trails providing access away from developed visitor facilities (e.g., long-distance bicycle loop trails)	▪ Hiking trails (hike only) ▪ Bicycle trails (hike/bike only) ▪ Equestrian trails (hike/horse only) ▪ Multi-use trails (hike/bike/horse)	▪ Primarily native tread surface ▪ Includes the less robust trail structures for resource protection and visitor safety
Class III	Lightly used backcountry trails (e.g., backcountry hiking trails)	▪ Hiking trails (hike only) ▪ Bicycle trails (hike/bike only) ▪ Equestrian trails (hike/horse only)	▪ Primarily native tread surface ▪ Avoids trail structures unless necessary
Class IV	Special use and administrative access trails (e.g., access routes to utility infrastructure)	▪ Hiking trails (hike only)	▪ Native tread surface ▪ Avoids trail structures

Source: Data provided by State Parks and compiled by Ascent in 2025.



4.2 ROAD AND TRAIL SUSTAINABILITY

Overview

Sustainable Roads and Trails

A “sustainable” road or trail is designed, constructed, or reconstructed so that it:

- Does not adversely affect natural and cultural resources
- Can withstand the impacts of the intended user groups
- Meets the needs of the intended user to a degree that the user does not deviate from the established road or trail alignment
- Survives the natural elements while receiving only routine cyclical maintenance

Designing, constructing, and maintaining sustainable roads and trails requires a thorough understanding of the landforms they traverse. It also requires an understanding of the expected user groups and the needs and design standards that are specific to each user group. Combining this information with high-quality construction materials results in a sustainable road or trail. Roads or trails that do not meet the “sustainable” definition but are considered integral to park operations may be constructed with specific trail structures and features added to help address the problems that lead to the lack of sustainability. The sections below describe the range of sustainability and maintainability for roads and trails. More information on road and trail sustainability can be found in the California State Parks Trails Handbook (State Parks 2019).

Maintainable Unsustainable Roads and Trails

Maintainable unsustainable trails do not meet sustainability trail definitions but are considered integral to park operations, such as those that provide visitor access to important areas or are in areas where visitors would otherwise create non-system routes if system trails were not provided.

These trails, when allotted the appropriate design elements and resources, can be maintained or reconstructed to avoid significant environmental impacts from the trail.

Unmaintainable Unsustainable Roads and Trails

Unmaintainable unsustainable roads and trails are those that are improperly designed and/or constructed and can't be made sustainable or maintainable through trail reconstruction or reengineering. The priority for these trails is to remove, restore, and/or reroute rather than try to maintain them because they often cost more to maintain than is worthwhile. Often these routes become unusable and other routes develop to accommodate access, thus increasing adverse environmental effects.



All but two of the system roads and trails within TASP are multi-use and open to hiking, bicycling, and equestrian use.

Resource Considerations

Roads and trails are considered park facilities like restrooms, campsites, and parking lots. They are developed to provide access to the natural and cultural resources of a park and to enhance visitor enjoyment of those resources. Thus, the facilities of a park unit should be designed and constructed to be compatible with the park resources.

Decisions regarding design, layout, and construction of roads and trails should be balanced with what is best for the park's resources in addition to what is best for the user. Ideally, no road or trail should compromise the integrity of park resources.

If a road or trail route cannot avoid significantly affecting resources, or if it becomes too costly to construct or maintain a road or trail to avoid impacts to resources, an alternative route should be considered or the need should be reassessed.

Sustainability Improvement Techniques

There are various techniques that can be implemented to improve the sustainability, functionality, and user experience on a road or trail. The four main techniques are described in Table 4-2 and include:

- Reconstruction
- Reengineering/redesigning
- Rerouting
- Removal and restoration

These techniques are considered best management practices for maintaining sustainable roads and trails within the state park system. Additional and more detailed information can be found in *State Parks' Project Implementation and Best Management Practices* (2009) and *Trails Handbook* (2019). This section is meant to supplement but not replace avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures in the environmental document for this plan.



Two Quarry Trail is an example of a road-to-trail conversion, which is a type of road reengineering project.



Table 4-2 Road and Trail Sustainability Improvement Techniques

Technique	Purpose	Overview	Example Activities
Reconstruction	Rehabilitate an existing trail when the alignment is sustainable or “unsustainable but maintainable”	- Construction work on an existing road or trail to bring it back to its original design - Used in cases where standard maintenance is insufficient to complete this task	- Improving/rehabilitating drainage features and structures - Reshaping trail backslope - Reestablishing original route profiles - Scarifying trail tread - Rehabilitating tread elevations - Repairing/reconstructing trail structures (e.g., switchbacks, climbing turns, bridges, culverts, boardwalks, causeways)
Reengineering or Redesigning	Improve unsustainable situations on existing trails that can be remediated with proper trail design techniques	- Used to create a sustainable trail when the existing trail alignment could be sustainable, but improperly designed structures have created an unsustainable situation - Can create an “unsustainable but maintainable” trail when the existing alignment must be retained - Can include road-to-trail conversions which is a reengineering technique used for transforming an existing road into a recreational trail	- Minor reroutes within the original trail corridor - Lengthening the trail using curvilinear techniques to reduce trail linear grade - Improving drainage by separating the trail from natural drainage features - Reducing linear grades using cut-and-fill techniques - Road-to-trail conversions include narrowing the road bench cut in a process similar to road/trail removal
Rerouting	Realign a trail when the existing alignment is unsustainable	- Used to relocate a trail outside of its original corridor when the current corridor is determined to be unsustainable - Used to bypass sensitive resource areas, provide a sustainable grade, expand trail width, or improve trail connectivity	- Flagging new trail corridor - Clearing new trail corridor - Constructing new trail alignment - Removal and restoration of the old trail corridor
Removal and Restoration	Correct disturbances to resources created by existing roads and trails, maintenance activities, and visitor use	- Often coupled with rerouting or new trail construction as well as site restoration - Typically, a rerouted or replacement trail is constructed before the old trail is removed and the site restored to avoid fragmenting the existing trail system	- De-compacting trail bench and cut - Aerating soil to promote revegetation and bonding of imported soil - Restoring the natural slope contour to facilitate natural sheet flow drainage by excavating soil and placing it against the cutbank - Reestablishing vegetation using existing native seed banks, or transplanting or seeding native species

Source: Information compiled by Ascent in 2025.

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