

OK BOJ 4/3/12

Sierra Nevada Conservancy-Progress Report

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program
Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control
River and Coastal Protection Act of 2008 (Proposition 84)**

Grantee Name: Placer County Department of Facility Services

Project title: Hidden Falls Regional Park – Trail Connectivity
Studies

SNC Reference Number: SNC070140 **Submittal Date:** 03/30/2012

Report Preparer: Valarie Bayne / Andy Fisher **Phone #:** 530-889-6819

Check one:

6-Month Progress Report
 Final Report

6-Month Progress Reports should reflect the previous six months. Final Reports should reflect the entire grant period.

A. Progress Report Summary: (Please provide a general description of work completed during this reporting period.)
Determination and flagging of trail alignment and bridge locations to connect Hidden Falls Regional Park to Taylor Ranch and preliminary studies including GPS site survey, geotechnical, cultural, archaeological, biological, and schematic civil design of bridges.

B. Deliverables or Outcomes completed during this Reporting Period or Milestones Achieved: (Include specific information, such as public meetings held, agency participation, partnerships developed, or acres mapped, treated or restored.)

All deliverables in project scope were completed except the Phase 1 ESA. It was determined that participating property owners would not be interested in the performance of a Phase 1 ESA until later in the negotiation process.

The determination of the final trail alignment has resulted in willing seller letters and discussions with three property owners for the purpose of purchasing trail easements and/or fee property necessary to provide trail connectivity between Hidden Falls Regional Park and the Taylor Ranch.

C. Challenges or Opportunities Encountered: (Please describe what has worked and what hasn't; include any solutions you initiated to resolve problems. If your project is not on schedule, please explain why here.)

At outset of project, property owners, Rohrer, Campbell, and Haddad expressed willingness to discuss sale of connectivity trail easements (see attached Trail Connectivity Study map). After execution of grant contract, Rohrer discontinued discussions. This stopped progress on the project due to the lack of viable trail connectivity options. In late 2011, a fourth property owner, Loudon, emerged and expressed willingness to discuss a new alignment that would provide connectivity without the participation Rohrer. This gave new life to the project and required rapid response on the part of consultants in order to complete studies on the new alignment.

D. Unanticipated Successes Achieved: (Please describe any additional successes beyond completing scheduled tasks or meeting scheduled milestones.)

During the course of the project performance period the Placer Land Trust, with Placer County financial participation, was able to acquire the 1700 acre Bruin Ranch including public trail rights. With the purchase, the successful acquisition of the connectivity parcels studied under this grant agreement, will provide approximately 45 miles of public trails connecting Hidden Falls Regional Park to the Bear River on 3,888 acres of preserved open space.

E. Compare Actual Costs to Budgeted Costs: (Please refer to your grant agreement to list your deliverables/budget categories and budgeted costs compared to actual costs incurred during this reporting period in the table below.)

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	Budgeted SNC Dollars	Actual Dollars
Survey	\$20,000	\$17,448.38
Civil Engineering Design, including trail alignments and bridge crossing locations	\$114,000	\$95,314.92
Study Reports	\$6,000	\$0.00
GRAND TOTAL	\$140,000	\$112,763.30

Explanation: (if needed)

Work related to study reports was included in the line item for Civil Engineering Design. Given the structure of our consultant contacts, the production of reports was performed concurrently with the design and was difficult to distinguish.

F. Do you have information to report on the project-specific Performance Measures for your project? (If so, please list the Performance Measures below and describe your progress.)

- 1) Resources Leveraged: Over \$20 Million in County, private, state, and federal funding has been committed to the acquisition and development of open space and public trails in the Big Hill Area of Placer County. The connectivity parcels studies under this grant project, are the final linking pieces to 3,888 acres of preserved open space and trail connection from Hidden Falls Regional Park to the Bear River. Studies, reports, and plans produced by this project are fully funded through this grant agreement. Appraisal, acquisition, and development of trails and bridges will be paid for by County and other sources. Ongoing maintenance will be provided by County sources.
- 2) Impact on collaboration and cooperation among stakeholders: Placer County and Placer Land Trust are major partners in a plan to create nearly 4,000 acres of conserved open space with public trail access from Hidden Falls Regional Park to the Bear River. The product of this grant project provides an agreed upon blueprint for public access between Placer County and Placer Land Trust owned parcels.
- 3) Capacity building within region: Studies, plans, and designs produced under this grant project are a critical step in the acquisition and development of the final connecting trail easements that will open 3,888 acres of connected open space with approximately 45 miles of public trail to the residents of Western Placer County and neighboring communities.
- 4) Number of acres protected through ultimate easement or fee title acquisition: Easements or fee title lands acquired as a result of this project will provide connectivity to 3,888 acres of preserved open space and directly add approximately 17 acres of additional protected land along the Coon Creek Corridor
- 5) Number of trail miles connected and additional public access provided by successfully bridging already protected lands through future easement or fee title acquisition: The acquisitions associated with this project will connect approximately 45 miles of public trails (30 miles to the south and 15 miles to the north) and add about 3,000 lineal feet of connecting trail to the network.

G. Were there any other relevant materials produced under the terms of this Agreement that are not a part of the budgeted deliverables? If so, please attach copies. (Include digital photos, maps, media coverage of project, or other work products.)

N/A

H. Next Steps: (Work anticipated in the next 6 months, including location and timing of any scheduled events related to the project.)

Placer County plans to perform appraisals and continue negotiations with property owners leading to the purchase of trail easements or fee title parcels.

Please Complete this Section for FINAL Report ONLY

Capacity-Building Results and Collaboration and Cooperation with Stakeholders:

(What partnerships did you initiate or strengthen as a result of this project? How did they affect the project outcome? If applicable, how did this grant increase your organization's capacity? What is your plan to sustain this increase?)

See Item F. above

Description of Project Accomplishments:

1. Most Significant Accomplishment

Describe in one concise, well-written paragraph, the most significant accomplishment that resulted from this grant.

This grant has provided a well researched layout and schematic design of trail and bridge facilities that will be needed to provide public connectivity between the 1,200 acre Hidden Falls Regional Park, and 2,688 acres of conservation land to the northeast. The maps will facilitate negotiation with connecting property owners, and the technical reports and drawings will aid in cost estimation and the acquisition of funding.

2. WOW Factor

If applicable, please describe anything that happened as a result of the project or during the project that is particularly impressive.

At the outset of the project, the goal was to acquire trail easements to connect the 1,200 acre Hidden Falls Regional Park with 795 acres of land owned by the Placer Land Trust. Since the execution of this grant agreement, the Placer Land Trust and Placer County have purchased the 1,775 acre Bruin Ranch. This will result in 3,888 acres of conserved land with connected public trail access.

3. Design and Implementation

When considering the design and implementation of this project, what lessons did you learn that might help other grantees implement similar work?

The administrative requirements for environmental review and permitting have grown in cost and time commitment. The state and federal permitting requirements for construction related activity near water ways, even if it is purely for restoration or passive recreation purposes, requires a significant portion of project resources. In addition, the development of conservation land for public use in rural areas brings additional cost due to remote access. Land managers must be prepared for additional costs and not rely on cost projection data derived from more developed areas.

4. Indirect Impact

Please describe any indirect benefits of the project such as information that has been developed as a result of the project that is being used by several other organizations to improve decision-making, or a conservation easement funded by this grant that encouraged other landowners in the area to have conservation easements on their property.

The vision and diagram of conserved land and public access in Placer County extending from Hidden Falls Regional Park to the Nevada County line at the Bear River, has provided a valuable resource to Nevada County and the Nevada County Land Trust as they further efforts to conserve land and public access from the bear River to the Spenceville Wildlife Area and portions of the Overland Emigrant Trail in their jurisdiction.

5. Collaboration and Conflict Resolution

If you worked in collaboration or cooperation with other organizations or institutions, describe those arrangements and their importance to the project. Also, describe if you encountered conflict in the project and how you dealt with it, or if there was conflict avoided as a result of the project.

The conservation and public access development of nearly 4,000 acres of northwest Placer County Sierra Foothills has been an immense collaboration of private and public stakeholders including the Placer Legacy Open Space and Agricultural Conservation Program, Placer County Land Trust, Sierra Nevada Conservancy, State Parks, Natural Resources Agency, Sierra Business Counsel, Trust for Public Lands, private donations, cooperating land owners, REI, the Packard Foundation, Folsom Auburn Trail Riders Action Coalition, Meadow Vista Trails Association, Sun City Lincoln Hills Hiking Club, United Auburn Indian Community, Enos family of the Maidu Tribe, and the California Native Plant Society.

The conservation efforts have been cooperative in nature between the stakeholders. The willing seller-willing buyer policies of the Placer Legacy Program and Placer Land Trust require patience with interested land owners in some cases.

6. Capacity-Building

SNC is interested in both the capacity of your organization, as well as local and regional capacity. Please describe the overall health of your organization including areas in need of assistance. SNC is interested in the strength and involvement of your board, significant changes to your staff, size and involvement of membership. In addition, describe how your project improved capabilities of partners, or the larger community.

Although reduced in staff size since the economic downturn beginning in 2007, Placer County remains among the healthiest local agencies in California. Through the investment of over \$10 Million in general funds to the Placer Legacy Program in the early 2000's, the Placer County Board of Supervisors has been able to leverage grant funding to complete the public access development of Hidden Falls Regional Park and is prepared to complete negotiations with connecting property owners, even in these difficult times. However, the State bond funded grant programs that have provided majority matching funds for open space acquisition and development are

nearing their end. Further acquisition and development of open space areas is expected to slow until new revenue can be identified.

The volunteer base at Hidden Falls Regional Park has grown and remains faithful and eager to provide labor for activities including vegetation control, trail construction, signage installation, and maintenance.

7. Challenges

Did the project face internal or external challenges? How were they addressed? Describe each challenge and any actions that you took to address it. Was there something that SNC did or could have done to assist you? Did you have to change any of your key objectives in response to conditions “on the ground”?

Initial assumptions about participating land owners along the route of desired trail connectivity included an easement along the southeastern portion of the Rohrer property (see attached map). Discussions with the Rohrer family broke down during the grant performance period casting doubts on the viability of the connectivity efforts. However, late in 2011, a new trail route was proposed that would successfully bypass the Rohrer property. This is the alignment now depicted on the attached maps and will be the basis for final negotiations with the Haddad, Campbell, and Loudon Families.

8. Photographs

Grantees are strongly encouraged to submit photos, slides or digital images whenever possible. These images will be used for SNC publications such as annual reports or on the website. Please make sure you clearly identify location, activity, and your project with each submitted image. Images will be credited to the submitting organization, unless specified otherwise.

Attachments:

- Map – Connectivity Study Map
- Map – Placer County Big Hill Area Public Access Conservation Land

9. Post Grant Plans

What are the post-grant plans for the project if it does not conclude with the grant? Include a description of the following (if applicable): (1) Changes in operations or scope; (2) Replication or use of findings; (3) Names of other organizations you expect to involve; (4) Plans to support the project financially, and; (5) Communication plans?

- 1) The successful acquisition of trail connectivity easements will begin the process of development of approximately 20 additional miles of public trails leading from Hidden Falls Regional Park to the Bear River. These trails and bridges would become part of the trail inventory of Placer County.

- 2) The plans(bridge schematic design), maps (trail alignment and conservation areas), and reports (geotechnical, rare plant, cultural resources) provide all of the data necessary to complete appraisals, finish negotiations, and will provide a base for the completion of detailed construction documents for bridge construction.
- 3) Placer County plans to continue relationships with all of the partners listed in #4 above.
- 4) Placer County plans to support the acquisition, development, and ongoing maintenance of the connectivity trails with a combination of Placer Legacy Open Space Trust funds, grants, mitigation fees, donations, and volunteers.
- 5) Placer County Parks and Grounds Division maintains a web site for the dissemination of information about all County recreational facilities. In addition the Placer County Public Information Office works with news agencies to provide information on noteworthy events and opportunities.

10. Post Grant Contact

Who can be contacted a few years from now to follow up on the project? Please provide name and contact information.

Placer County Department of Facility Services
Attn: Andy Fisher, Park Planner
11476 'C' Avenue
Auburn, CA 95603
Office (530) 889-6819
Fax (530) 889-6819
afisher@placer.ca.gov

SNC-approved Performance Measures: (Please list each Performance Measure for your Project, as identified in your Grant Agreement, and the results/outcomes.)

See Item F. above

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program Project Reporting Guidelines

Progress Reports are required periodically throughout the term of the Grant Agreement (Refer to Exhibit B of the Grant Agreement). These reports will allow you and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) to see the degree to which the project is on track and achieving your projected outcomes. Your Progress Reports will further provide the SNC with information that will help us to explain your work to the Board Members and various other audiences. Timing of Progress Reports is specified in the Project Schedule included in Exhibit A of the Grant Agreement, but generally every 6 months until completion of the project.

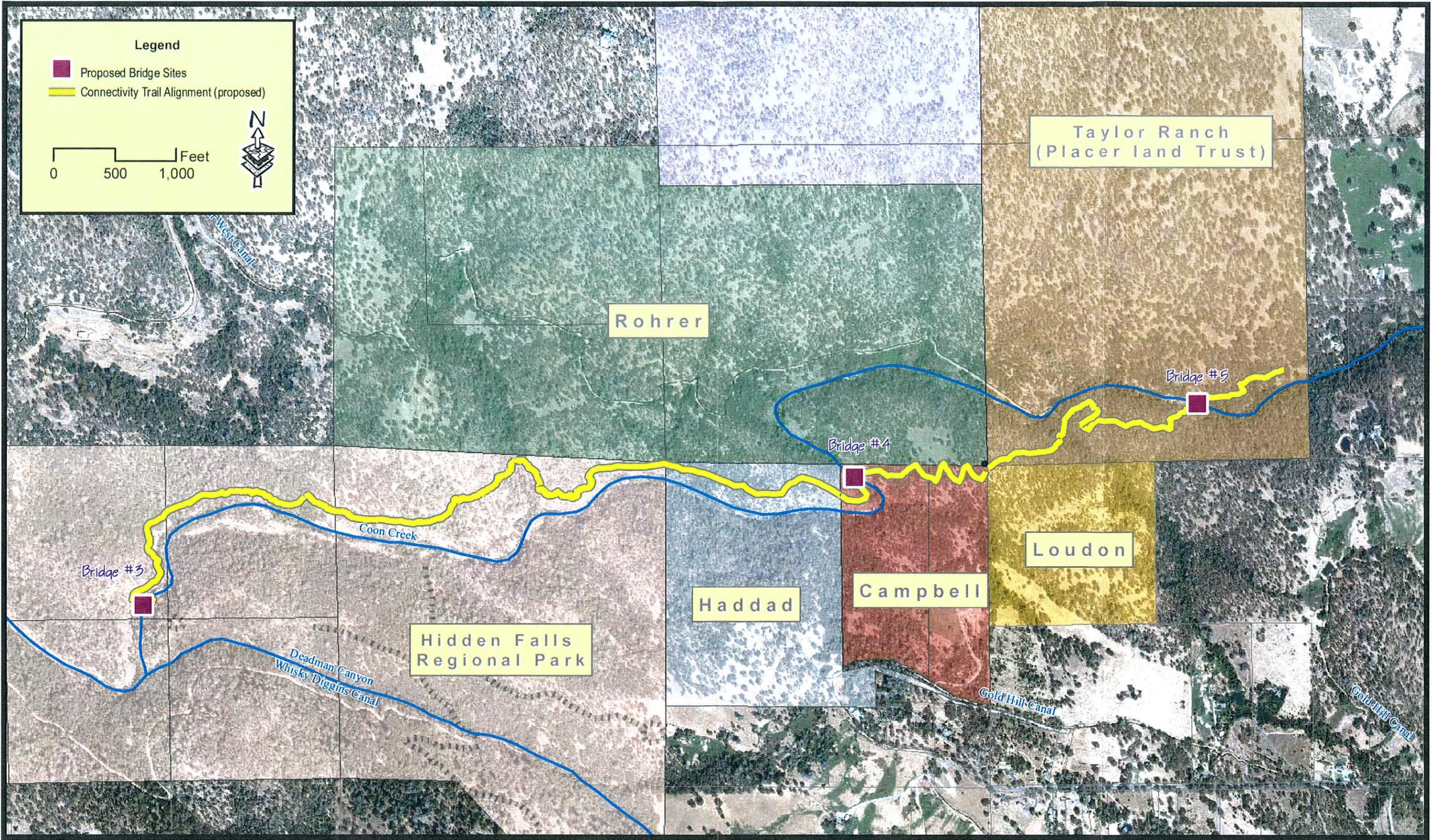
A Progress Reporting Form is provided to Grantees on the SNC Website. **Six-month Progress Reports** should reflect the previous 6-month period; **Final Reports** should address each question for the entire grant period – looking at the project as a whole.

The form specifies the items you will need to report on. For the Six-Month Interim Report these include, but are not limited to: *A Progress Report Summary of work completed, Deliverables or Outcomes Completed, Challenges or Opportunities Encountered, Unanticipated Successes Achieved, Actual Costs compared to Budgeted Costs, Any Additional Relevant Materials Produced, and Next Steps.*

The Final Report will include additional information, such as: *Resources Leveraged, Capacity-Building Results and Collaboration and Cooperation with Stakeholders, a Description of Project Accomplishments, and SNC Approved Performance Measures.*

Please make sure that you submit complete reports by the dates requested in your Grant Agreement.

Trail Connectivity Study Map



PLACER COUNTY - BIG HILL AREA PUBLIC ACCESS CONSERVATION LAND

