



Painted Rock Trail Realignment Proposal

Placer County, CA

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View from the proposed realignment of the Tahoe Rim Trail near Painted Rock

SUMMARY

This document, prepared by the Tahoe Rim Trail Association, outlines a proposal containing a plan for the realignment of Tahoe Rim Trail (TRT) in Placer County near Painted Rock in the Tahoe City to Brockway Summit Section of the trail. The existing trail in this area, about 3,600 feet of tread between the Painted Rock Vista and Forest Service road 16N53 (Deer Creek Road), does not meet established trail standards for most of its length. Some sections of trail are too steep and have become deeply eroded. Other sections have been rebuilt without authorization to create more bike-friendly flow that is difficult and dangerous for other trail users. In addition, the existing trail does not offer any scenic views although excellent views are readily available in the vicinity. The project described in this proposal would construct approximately 6,000 feet of new trail to realign the Tahoe Rim Trail onto a trail designed to multi-use standards with sustainable grades and panoramic views, improving safety and mitigating environmental damage.

PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

INTRODUCTION

As the Tahoe Rim Trail passes through the Painted Rock area it generally provides trail users with a world class backcountry recreation experience. A major exception to this experience occurs on the south-facing slope between Painted Rock and Forest Service Road 16N53 (Deer Creek Road). In this location, the trail's original layout often follows the fall line and is too steep, which has caused deep scouring and erosion. In addition, clandestine and unauthorized trail work has occurred which has transformed the trail from one that is safe and accessible for all trail users to one that is bicycle-optimized, with bermed turns and jumps. It is very difficult if not impossible for most mountain bike riders to use this trail in the uphill direction, and it is unsafe and unpleasant for all hikers and equestrians in either direction.

Trail counters deployed in this area suggest that this section of trail is moderately utilized. It is popular with hikers travelling in both directions, with downhill bikers, and is also open to equestrians. Providing these trail users with a safe and enjoyable trail experience is an essential goal of this proposal.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose and need for action reflect the difference between the existing condition and the desired condition of the TRT in this area. The Trail Management Objectives for the Tahoe Rim Trail in this section call for a designed use of Hiker/Pedestrian with a target grade of less than 10% and a short pitch maximum of 15% for up to 200 feet.

In its existing condition, the trail south of and below Painted Rock has many sections exceeding 15% grade, with some sections up to 25%. In these locations the steep grade has contributed to erosion on the trail which in some places is knee deep. Further, the trail has been rebuilt without authorization to improve the experience of downhill mountain bikers at the expense of other user types. The trail does not meet USFS standards for a multi-use trail with a designed use of Hiker/Pedestrian.

There is a need to provide trail users with a safe, scenic, enjoyable single track trail that meets USFS standards and will result in the desired condition described in the Trail Management Objectives for this section of trail. Therefore, the purpose of this project is to realign the trail in a better location, and to rehabilitate the trail in a few areas where maintaining the existing trail alignment is feasible.

EXISTING CONDITION PHOTOGRAPHS



Numerous steep sections are eroding and becoming braided, such as these sections at 18% (above) and 25% (below).



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November 2018*



Deep scouring has exposed tree roots on this badly eroded section.



Poorly routed, steep trail is causing braiding.

*Painted Rock Trail Realignment Proposal
November 2018*



Bike-optimized features such as jumps (above) and bermed S-turns (below) are unsafe and unpleasant for hikers and equestrians and are not suitable for a designed use of Hiker/Pedestrian



PROPOSAL

Volunteers and staff of the TRTA carried out extensive on-site evaluations of potential approaches to the issues on this section of trail, considering factors including cost, feasibility of construction, environmental impacts, and user experience. A number of alternative options were considered to meet the need of this project to realign and rehabilitate the TRT. Numerous obstacles including extremely steep side slopes, lack of vistas, and poor locations for siting turns led to the development of the TRTA proposed realignment locations presented here.

TRTA PROPOSED REALIGNMENT

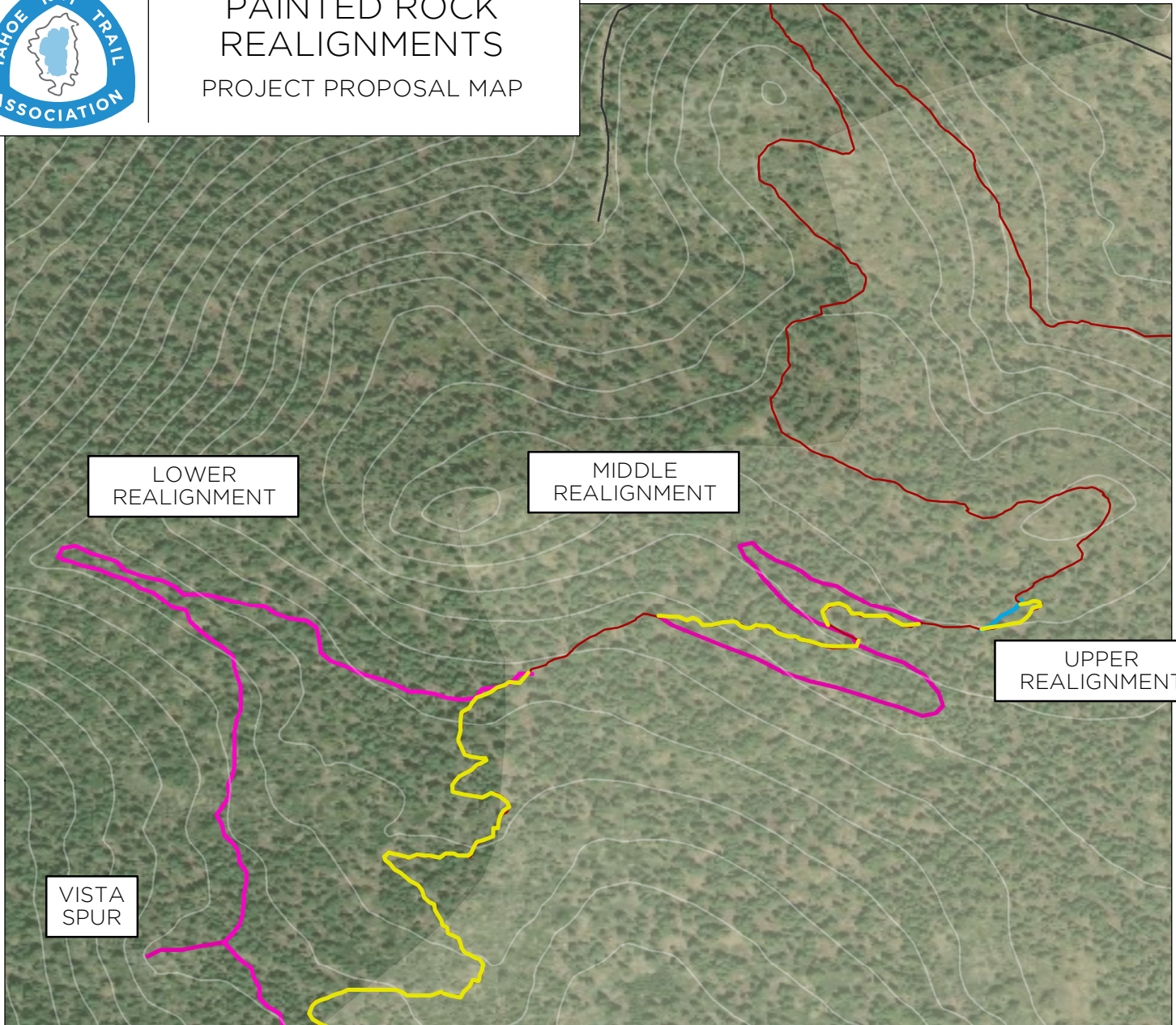
The proposed realignment would replace three sections of existing trail: approximately 250 feet on the upper section, about 1,000 feet on the middle section, and approximately 2,400 feet on the lower section. This is a total of approximately 3,650 feet of existing trail that would be closed and restored. The lengths of the proposed realignments to bypass those three sections are approximately 180 feet on the upper section, approximately 2,100 feet on the middle section, and approximately 3,500 feet on the lower section. In addition, a vista trail of approximately 250 feet is also proposed. This is a total of approximately 6,030 feet of new trail construction. It should be noted that the upper section realignment is actually reclaiming the original realignment of the trail before unauthorized construction modified it.

The proposed realignments would be full bench construction at less than 8% grade, generally following the existing contour of the slope. There are three proposed turns. Each of these turns is located in an area where the grade of the cross slope is less than 15%. In these locations, slight modifications to the grade through excavation and construction of retaining walls might be utilized to facilitate a well-draining, sustainable turn. The proposed turn radius is 10 feet. The realignment routes traverse an open conifer forest interspersed with outcrops of volcanic rock. There are no water bodies or streams on or near the realignments, and the routes do not cross any significant drainages. There are no areas of highly technical construction through cliffs, large rocks, or other challenging geography, though adequate cross slopes are present to provide excellent drainage. The proposed realignments stay well within the borders of Forest Service owned property. The upper two realignments are on land managed by the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit. However, the lower realignment section leaves the Tahoe Basin and is primarily located on land managed by the Tahoe National Forest. The Tahoe Rim Trail Association can complete the construction of the reroute through the use of volunteer trail crews with minimal US Forest Service assistance, though hazard tree mitigation and other tree removal would be required.



PAINTED ROCK REALIGNMENTS

PROJECT PROPOSAL MAP



PROJECT LOCATION



LEGEND

- Tahoe Rim Trail
- Proposed New Trail Construction
- Proposed Realignment to Old Trail
- Close & Rehab
- FS Road
- 20' Contours
- Tahoe Basin

0 350 700 Feet

PROPOSED REALIGNMENT PHOTOGRAPHS



A typical view of the proposed realignments shows relatively open fir forests over moderate terrain that should prove relatively simple for trail construction.



The proposed location for the turn on the lower realignment.

*Painted Rock Trail Realignment Proposal
November 2018*



The upper realignment is actually just reclaiming the original trail as it existed prior to unauthorized reconstruction.



The views from the lower realignment are spectacular.

CONCLUSION

The realignment outlined in this proposal would significantly improve the experience and safety of hikers, bikers, and equestrians who travel on the Tahoe Rim Trail in the Painted Rock area. If approved by the US Forest Service, the TRTA would pursue funding to support volunteer trail crews who would perform the vast majority of the work necessary to complete the reroute. Assistance would be required in mitigating hazard trees in the area and in cutting standing trees in the trail alignment. In addition, the Tahoe Rim Trail Association is committed to maintaining the new trail indefinitely, as it would be an integral part of the Tahoe Rim Trail System.