

## **Restoration Alternative with Interpretive Trails**

Proposed for the **Arana Gulch Greenbelt** to Santa Cruz Parks & Recreation Department  
by Friends of Arana Gulch

7 April 2010

**Goal:** to protect and conserve the diverse habitat of Arana Gulch, providing for recovery of the endangered tarplant (*Holocarpha macredenia*), while also providing for public access, education, and enjoyment of the greenbelt (an Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area).

**Preface:** Access to the Arana Gulch greenbelt is currently available from the north and the south. Both access entrances provide street parking. The south entrance, from the upper Harbor provides handicapped parking spaces. This entrance is reached through the upper Santa Cruz Harbor, from neighborhood streets as well as a major arterial (7th Avenue). An 8' wide pathway of decomposed granite that is maintained by the Harbor permits access from the upper Harbor parking area to the greenbelt. The north access entrance is easily reached from many neighborhood streets as well as a major arterial (Soquel Avenue).

Santa Cruz County is considering a roadway and drainage project (for erosion control into Arana Creek) that will add bike lanes and sidewalks on Brommer Street Extension (.2 mile), as it comes into the Harbor from 7th Avenue. This upgrade will provide safety for bicyclists and pedestrians who come from the east to access the greenbelt and who now have to share a narrow roadway with vehicular traffic.

### **Elements and Actions of the Alternative:**

1. The 2006 Arana Gulch Master Plan, with its vision and goals for restoration, rehabilitation and conservation of the "critical habitat" of the endangered tarplant, as well as its associated web of life species in Arana Gulch's coastal prairie grasslands minus the Broadway-Brommer link transportation project and the paved route from Agnes St.
2. The City sells its right-of-way property to create a dedicated fund for tarplant management. The tarplant Adaptive Management Working Group (AMWG) is formed and recovery of tarplant and its habitat begins in earnest as soon as the City receives its permit from the Coastal Commission. Construction of interpretive trails is not tied to funding for tarplant management.
3. The existing Agnes Street entrance is reconfigured to allow wheelchair access to the greenbelt. Handicapped parking spaces are established. An interpretive trail from the Agnes Street entrance that swings west and follows the western perimeter, made of either decomposed granite or a boardwalk type surface will be designed and engineered during tarplant recovery efforts. This trail can be 6' wide to accommodate two way traffic, and can have some pop outs, with educational signage, that can also be used for right-of-way courtesies in case of many simultaneous trail users. It will continue on the western flank to just before historical tarplant population Area B, where there will be a small turnaround and interpretive signage.
4. Another interpretive trail will continue, south, from the turnaround area, through the old trees grove, and stay on the western perimeter of the greenbelt. It will also be 6' wide for two way

traffic, and can have some pop outs with educational signage, that can also be used for right-of-way courtesies in case of many simultaneous users. This trail will continue to the Harbor overlook area, then swing back north and end at the existing Harbor entrance decomposed gravel pathway (which exits on Brommer Street Extension at the upper Harbor).

5. The existing footpath that goes northward from the Harbor entrance pathway will continue, as an interpretive trail, heading north as it currently does, bearing to the east and following the proposed "Marsh Vista Trail" of the AG Master Plan. This will keep users out of Area D, a recent historical tarplant population area.

6. Interpretive trails will be available to all users, who will police themselves with consideration & courtesy as the guiding principle.

7. The ancient oak tree adjacent to the trail will be fenced and the public will no longer be allowed access to it. This tree is being destroyed by students and other young people, using it as a hangout and carving deep scars into its vulnerable bark. Litter and graffiti abound.

8. There would be no building on the riparian zone behind the Dry Storage Area and fencing will be constructed to prevent short cuts as well as further east just past Arana Creek to prevent erosion. There would be no bridge (steel span) over Arana Creek.

9. Some or all foot paths that currently cross Arana Gulch will be closed as the interpretive trails are built. If necessary, fencing to keep users off the meadow will be built. Only access for restoration activities would then be allowed in the restoration/recovery areas.

Respectfully submitted,

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on behalf of Friends of Arana Gulch