



Gold Country Trails Council
2017
STRATEGIC PLAN

Executive Summary

The GCTC Board in 2016 directed that a Strategic Plan be developed which would provide a comprehensive plan and guidance for future strategies and projects. A committee of ten GCTC members and with the input from a survey of the membership, produced a long term strategic plan.

A revised **mission statement** was created to reflect the changing times:
GCTC is an organization committed to develop, maintain, and advocate for safe integrated trails for equestrians and other non-motorized users.

A new **vision statement** was also created:
Public access to trails for equestrian use.

Goals, strategies and projects were developed to document the future directions that could be undertaken by GCTC over the next five years.

Six goals were identified (in short):

1. *Develop and maintain trails*
2. *Build a strong internal organization*
3. *Provide meaningful education to the membership*
4. *Market and promote GCTC*
5. *Develop a cooperative and working relationship with like minded groups, including the Forest Service*
6. *Engage the membership to be more involved in GCTC activities.*

A list of strategies and projects were established for each Goal based on input from the Survey, committee members and the membership. The strategies and projects will be reviewed by the Board each year and priorities will be established as to which projects should be accomplished with the help and support of the membership.

GCTC was founded as a non-motorized trail building and maintenance organization and the plan adheres to those roots, provides goals and projects to sustain those founding beliefs.

Gold County Trails Council (GCTC) Strategic Plan Overview

In 2016 the GCTC Board of Directors asked that a three to five year Strategic Plan be developed. From that direction a committee was formed of dedicated GCTC members to develop a Strategic Plan. A survey was conducted of the membership in 2016 to get their feed back and desires prior to formulating the actual plan. The committee met in January of 2017 to formulate a new Mission Statement and Vision reflecting the thoughts and responses from the survey and committee members. With the mission and vision completed the committee set out to develop goals and strategies/projects that would support the new mission and vision of GCTC. The committee identified six critical areas of interest:

1. Trail/Campground Building and Maintenance
2. Leadership-Administration
3. Education of the Membership
4. Public Relations, including Outreach, Fund Raising, and Marketing
5. Interagency Cooperation
6. Membership Involvement and Responsibilities.

From these broad areas, six specific goals were established to align the strategies and projects to be considered over the next five years.

History of Gold Country Trails Council

The Gold Country Trails Council was formed in 1981 as a non profit corporation by a group of horse-loving Nevada County families who wanted to fill a need for non-motorized trails in Nevada County and the surrounding foothills. Over the years, volunteers have constructed over 30 miles of non-motorized trails within the Tahoe National Forest.

The first trail was started in 1982 when GCTC obtained an encroachment permit to construct a non-motorized trail within the State Highway 20 Right of Way. It was named the Pioneer Trail, because it followed the early route the pioneers took when traveling over the Sierra Nevada mountains to Nevada City and Grass Valley.

In 1984, the Tahoe National Forest approved a proposal to extend the trail on National Forest lands with the goal of eventually connecting the Pioneer Trail with the Pacific Crest Trail. The Pioneer Trail utilizes segments of the emigrants' wagon roads as well as historic mining and hydroelectric ditches, old road beds and telephone/telegraph rights of way.

Several trail heads serve the 30-mile Pioneer Trail, including:

1. Harmony Market across from Five Mile House on Highway 20.
2. Gold Country Equestrian Trail Head on Washington Conservation Road, a.k.a. Lone Grave
3. Equestrian Trail Head near the Washington Overlook Vista
4. Skillman Horse Campground
5. Upper Burlington Road
6. Chalk Bluff Road
7. Omega Overlook
8. Zebright Road at Bear Valley

Most of the trails are forested, however there are openings with views of the surrounding mountains, meadows and lakes. Over the years a number of additional non-motorized trails have been developed off the original Pioneer trail, including the:

1. Dascombe Loop
2. Meyer Trail
3. Pfeiffer Trail
4. Zig Zag Trail
5. Cable Trail
6. Harmony Trail
7. Hallelujah Trail
8. Dogwood trail

GCTC also established and helps maintain and support two horse camps:

1. Skillman Horse Camp off Highway 20 above Nevada City, with access to the Pioneer Trail.
2. Little Lasier Meadow Horse Camp off Highway 89, north of Truckee, with access to the Pacific Crest Trail.

GCTC maintains close working relationships with the Tahoe National Forest, BONC (Bicyclists of Nevada County), and NCWR (Nevada County Woods Riders) motorcyclists, to ensure user cooperation and maintenance of the non-motorized and multi use trails in the Tahoe National Forest. This cooperation is supported by an annual United Trails workday. Other activities on the trails include an annual Wild West Endurance Ride and GCTC Annual Benefit Poker Ride.

Since GCTC's inception in 1981, tens of thousands of volunteer hours have been provided to Nevada County and the Tahoe National Forest to build and maintain trails and horse camps.

Defining the Mission Statement, Vision and Strategic Plan

- The Mission Statement is a brief description of GCTC's fundamental purpose and why GCTC exists.
- The Vision Statement is GCTC 's inspiration and it articulates the hopes and dreams of GCTC.
- The Strategic plan is a tool derived from a clear vision to provide guidance in fulfilling GCTC mission and establishing goals and describing projects, actions and resources needed to accomplish them over the next 3 to 5 years

MISSION STATEMENT

GCTC is an organization committed to develop, maintain, and advocate for safe integrated trails for equestrians and other non-motorized users.

VISION STATEMENT

Public Access To Trails for Equestrian Use

*"The clearest way into the universe is through a forest wilderness."
--John Muir*

Strategic Goals

Goal #1

Develop, maintain and protect non-motorized trails, campgrounds, and staging areas in the Tahoe National Forest and surrounding areas for the safe enjoyment of GCTC members and community.

1. With input from the Forest Service, design and publish detailed trail maps in the Pioneer Trail corridor, that includes major physical, historical and natural landmarks with trail names and distances of trail loops. Furnish maps at trail heads.
2. Develop and implement standards for improved trail signage.
3. In cooperation with BONC and NCWR, develop an annual workshop to discuss trail design, safety, trail etiquette, proper use of tools, and first aid demonstrations. Continue to support the United Trails day activities.
4. In cooperation with trail partners, raise and allocate financial and organizational resources to develop and maintain non-motorized trails, campgrounds, and staging areas.
5. *List of trails and campground projects:*
 - a. Continue annual maintenance on area trails:
 - Bowman Mountain trail reroute
 - Bull Penn Lake trail reroute
 - Complete Cable trail
 - b. Dascombe trail reroute.
 - c. Bridge over the Fuller Lake pen stock spillway on the eastern most end of the Pioneer trail.
 - d. Create non-motorized Bear Valley trails with equestrian parking (in conjunction with BYLT).
 - e. Support equestrian trail building at Rice Crossing and Royal Gorge
 - f. Support the development of Pack Saddle Horse Camp (near the Pacific Crest Trail, Gold Lake Area).
 - g. Evaluate the support given by the State Parks Department for equestrian trails and restroom facilities at Empire Mine and possible GCTC involvement.

- h. Skillman Horse Camp and Little Lasier Meadow Horse camp:
 - continue annual maintenance
 - maintain and improve the horse corrals, consider adding additional corrals at both camps
 - make entrance and in camp road improvements
- i. Work closely with the Forest Service to make needed improvements to Skillman Horse Camp, including better access to campsites, including some tree removal), fire rings, picnic tables, group parking, potable water, restroom upgrades.
- j. Improve and maintain Grouse Ridge lake trails in the Loney Meadows area.
- k. Direct resources towards Washington Conservation convict crews, professional trail builders or non-member volunteer groups when priority projects are beyond the ability of GCTC volunteers.
- l. Establish an educational program of trail etiquette including signage to promote responsible trail use, "bikes and hikers yield to horses," and report trail problems to ParkWatchReport app - www.ParkWatchReport.org

Goal #2:

Build a strong organizational structure that supports the Mission and can sustain GCTC over the long term:

1. Strengthen the leadership of GCTC by developing a succession plan for Board members and committee chairs; encourage rotation of Board positions.
2. Develop and expand interest in committees that provide rewarding and meaningful opportunities for members.
3. Provide adequate training, education, and desired expectations of Board Members and committee chairs.
4. Encourage an openness and inclusion of members and new members alike.
5. Update and develop where necessary a list of job descriptions for Board positions and committee chairs.

6. Create develop and fund a cloud-based Drop Box electronic filing system to store GCTC documents for Board and member use.
7. Conduct an orientation of duties and responsibilities for incoming Board members and Committee Chairs.
8. Encourage written reports from committee chairs and Board assignments and a Treasures report with expense categories and revenues.
9. Develop an annual budget with expense categories, capital projects and projected revenues at the December Board meeting.
10. Encourage mentoring by the Board and committee chairs with potential future leaders in the organization.

Goal #3:

Provide meaningful educational programs to the membership that relate to Equestrian activities, volunteerism, trail development and safety.

1. Provide an educational trail building day explaining trail and tool safety, science behind building trails and techniques, reviewing the trail areas maintained by GCTC, and expectation of volunteers on the trails.
2. Establish a training coordinator to expand opportunities for members to get chain saw certification, trail supervision, mechanical trail building equipment certification and a general educational trail building day for members and partners.
3. Develop special programming for GCTC members scheduled throughout the year:
 - Provide at least once a year a horse and rider clinic and a program on horse health topics.
 - Provide a basic first aid and CPR class to the membership at least every two years.
 - Provide a clinic on horse emergency care on the trail at least every two years.

- Provide a clinic on horse camping education, horse confinement, Leave No Trace principles, safety, camp cooking, etc., every two years.
- Provide a tack swap day and an opportunity for members to highlight their home business, services or wares to the members.

Goal #4:

Market, promote, fund raise and improve the image and interest in GCTC's Mission, making GCTC a compelling organization for the whole community.

1. Conduct out reach through a number of mediums to a broad spectrum of like-minded equestrian and trail building and community groups to support the GCTC mission.
2. Continue to raise awareness of the Pioneer Trail, its history and current development so that it becomes a treasured local resource with a strong following of non-motorized users, supporters and friends committed to its protection.
3. Continue with the GCTC Annual Benefit Poker Ride fund raiser held in June at Skillman Horse Campground. Refresh the program as needed, work with the members to solicit donations and prizes year round for the event. The Poker Ride is the largest fund raiser for GCTC and is a community show case for the organization.
4. Publish articles to educate the public on the safe use of trails with horses, hikers and bicycles with the importance of stewardship of the trails.
5. Participate in community events, such as parades, Earth Day, nature days, horse-related events, County Fair, etc., throughout the year to emphasize GCTC accomplishments, its mission and to recruit new members.
6. Develop programs that encourage youth participation in GCTC trail activities, the enjoyment of the outdoors and giving back to the community. Possibly a "Day of Giving." with projects outlined to be accomplished and working with high school and junior college students.
7. Develop an outreach to other horse groups, possibly coordinating supportive activities of mutual benefit with 4-H, FFA, Pony Club, Nevada County

Horsemen, Back Country Horsemen, High School and Junior College students and Nevada County Fair.

8. Consider developing a GCTC family day, (bring the kids and grandkids) with horse activities, games, BBQ, ice cream, fun day.
9. Become more of a trail advocacy group, form a committee that monitors legislative action that effects non-motorized trails and equestrian activities in our parks and forests.
10. Acquire a pop up tent with the GCTC logo, and promotional supplies, to be used to highlight the good work GCTC does at various community events with an eye to recruit new younger members.

Goal #5:

Develop a strong working relationship and cooperation with like minded organizations that support development and protection of our natural resources and equestrian activities and non motorized trails for community use.

1. Develop strong ties and working relationship with the Forest Service (Nevada City headquarters) at the senior level and hold the agency accountable for its responsibilities to assure long term protection and maintenance of the non-motorized trails and horse camps.
2. Strengthen partnerships with Nevada County Supervisors, State and Federal government agencies and elected representatives, educating them on the mission and accomplishments of GCTC.
3. Establish GCTC liaisons with the Bear Yuba Land Trust, Placer County Land Trust and Placer County Parks to promote the development of non-motorized and equestrian trails.
4. Develop relationships with Penn Valley Equestrian Groups and SRYCL.
5. Monitor the Nevada County Supervisors agendas, maintain a watch and support of the Historic Emigrant Trail located on the Nevada County public trail easement, and support the Mines to Pines trail effort.

6. Develop a working and cooperative relationship with the Nevada County Horsemen and possible future collaboration on programs and partnerships.
7. Monitor potential grants for funding trail development, horse camps and staging areas (parking).

Goal #6:

Engage and educate the membership on the mission and vision of GCTC with the responsibilities of stewardship and protection of trails, camps and natural resources.

1. Members are critical to the success of GCTC since they provide vital leadership, income and volunteer efforts on and off the trail and their efforts need to be nurtured.
2. Greater membership services and programs will be required to sustain members interest and participation in trail building, maintenance and administrative support of GCTC. Creative ideas will need to be developed to meet this need.
3. Create an electronic membership database with fields highlighting skills and expertise of members such as, work experience, hobbies and areas of interest that would help support the success and mission of GCTC.
4. Provide education and expectations of trail work days to volunteers prior to the work day so members have a clear idea of what is expected.
5. Develop a list of projects that are not physical in nature for members that are unable to participate on trail work days and who still want to support the mission of GCTC, such as making raffle prizes for our Poker Ride, write letters of support, help with public relations, etc.
6. Recruit current members to assist with non trail work day activities.
7. Develop a mentoring and buddy system for new members.
8. Develop a committee of current members to take new members on trail rides at Lone Grave and Skillman Horse Camp trails, familiarizing them with trail markings, horse water, safe trails, possibly two to three times a year.

9. Expand what is included in the new member packets to give members a complete understanding of the who, what and why of GCTC.

In Conclusion

These Goals are presented in no particular order of significance. The strategic planning format is as follows:

Goals:

To accomplish the mission, we will focus on the 'big picture' items.

Strategies and projects:

Steps GCTC will take to achieve the goals -

- Annually the Board will under take an evaluation of the strategies and projects and select those they wish to accomplish for the year.
- Assigning responsibilities, project deadlines and resources to complete the tasks.

--Submitted by Jeffrey Foltz, Strategic Plan Chair

Thanks to the Committee members who helped develop this Strategic Plan:

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