

FINAL DRAFT

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**USDA FS San Bernardino National Forest**

**County of San Bernardino**

**City of Rancho Cucamonga**

**Cucamonga Valley Water District**

**San Bernardino Council of Governments**

**Cucamonga Foothills Preservation Alliance**

**Rancho Cucamonga Fire Protection District**

# **Cucamonga Canyon Management Plan**

**San Bernardino County, CA**

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## Purpose of this Plan

The purpose of this management plan is to provide strategic direction and guidance for future management of Cucamonga Canyon. This management plan provides direction and guidance for the protection of the natural and cultural resources of the canyon, as well as allowing continued public access to the area. The plan provides a framework for informed decision making, while guiding resource management, practices, uses, and projects.

The management plan is adaptive in that it can be amended to update management direction based on new knowledge and information. It is strategic in nature and does not attempt to prescribe detailed management direction to cover every possible situation. While all components necessary for protection of the natural and cultural resources of the canyon are included, the management plan also provides flexibility needed to respond to uncertain or unknown future events and conditions such as fires, floods, climate change, changing economies, and social changes that may be important to consider at the time future decisions are made.

## Management Plan Organization, Content, and Terminology

This plan is comprised of new management direction for Cucamonga Canyon, as well as existing direction from the San Bernardino National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, City of Rancho Cucamonga zoning requirement direction and Cucamonga Valley Water District management direction. The management direction for the canyon consists of five elements:

*Desired conditions* are the specific social, economic, and ecological characteristics of the plan area, toward which management of the land and resources is to be directed. They are concise statements that describe a condition desired to be achieved sometime in the future.

A *standard* is a mandatory constraint on project and activity decision-making, established to help achieve or maintain the desired condition or conditions, to avoid or mitigate undesirable effects, or to meet applicable legal requirements.

A *guideline* is a constraint on project and activity decision-making that allows for departure from its terms, so long as the purpose of the guideline is met. Guidelines are established to help achieve or maintain the desired condition or conditions, to avoid or mitigate undesirable effects, or to meet applicable legal requirements.

*Management approaches* are also listed for the area and are considered to be other plan content. Management approaches describe the principal strategies and program priorities the Forest, City and Water District intends to use to carry out projects and activities under the management plan. Management approaches may discuss potential processes such as analysis, assessment, inventory, project planning or monitoring.

*Indicators and thresholds* are included to determine acceptable levels of impact from visitor use. The use of thresholds associated with monitoring originates from the fact that all visitor activities cause impact, thus some change in natural or cultural resource or experiential conditions is inevitable. While it may seem to make sense to focus purely on monitoring and managing the number the people, ultimately, it is the effects of visitor use we are concerned about, not the mere presence of people. Because of this reality, proactive management involves determining the acceptable level of change for the selected indicators. Thresholds serve this role by defining the

point at which the effects of visitor use on desired resource and experiential conditions are anticipated to become enough of a concern that a different, corrective management response is required to keep conditions acceptable. In this role, thresholds serve as a stop sign or a “line in the sand”. Two critically important concepts for thresholds are that: (1) although defined as “minimally acceptable,” thresholds still represent acceptable conditions, not degraded or impaired conditions; and (2) establishing a threshold does not imply that nothing will be done prior to reaching the threshold. Management strategies should always strive to maintain conditions that are better than the thresholds. Refer to Appendix A for thresholds and indicators for Cucamonga Canyon.

## Management Boundaries

### Access

Access to U.S. Forest Service lands is through the neighboring jurisdictions of the City of Rancho Cucamonga and the County of San Bernardino. Potential through routes have been analyzed by the working group composed of:

- U.S. Forest Service Personnel
- Rancho Cucamonga Fire District Personnel
- San Bernardino County Flood Control District Personnel
- County of San Bernardino Public Works Personnel
- City of Rancho Cucamonga Personnel
- Cucamonga Valley Water District Personnel

### Context for Options:

There will only be one consistent trail, with each option detailing a specific access point and parking method for the trail. Each option does not represent a separate or new trail. The options differ in where the access point will be, and the designated method of parking, such as street parking or parking lots.

Analysis of these sites and maps are listed below:

### Option 1: Almond/Sapphire Parking: Turquoise Entrance

Existing fee based paid street parking along Almond and Sapphire with travel route west on Almond through the wash entrance past Turquoise. Potential long-term solution with dedication of land during final development.

Benefits:

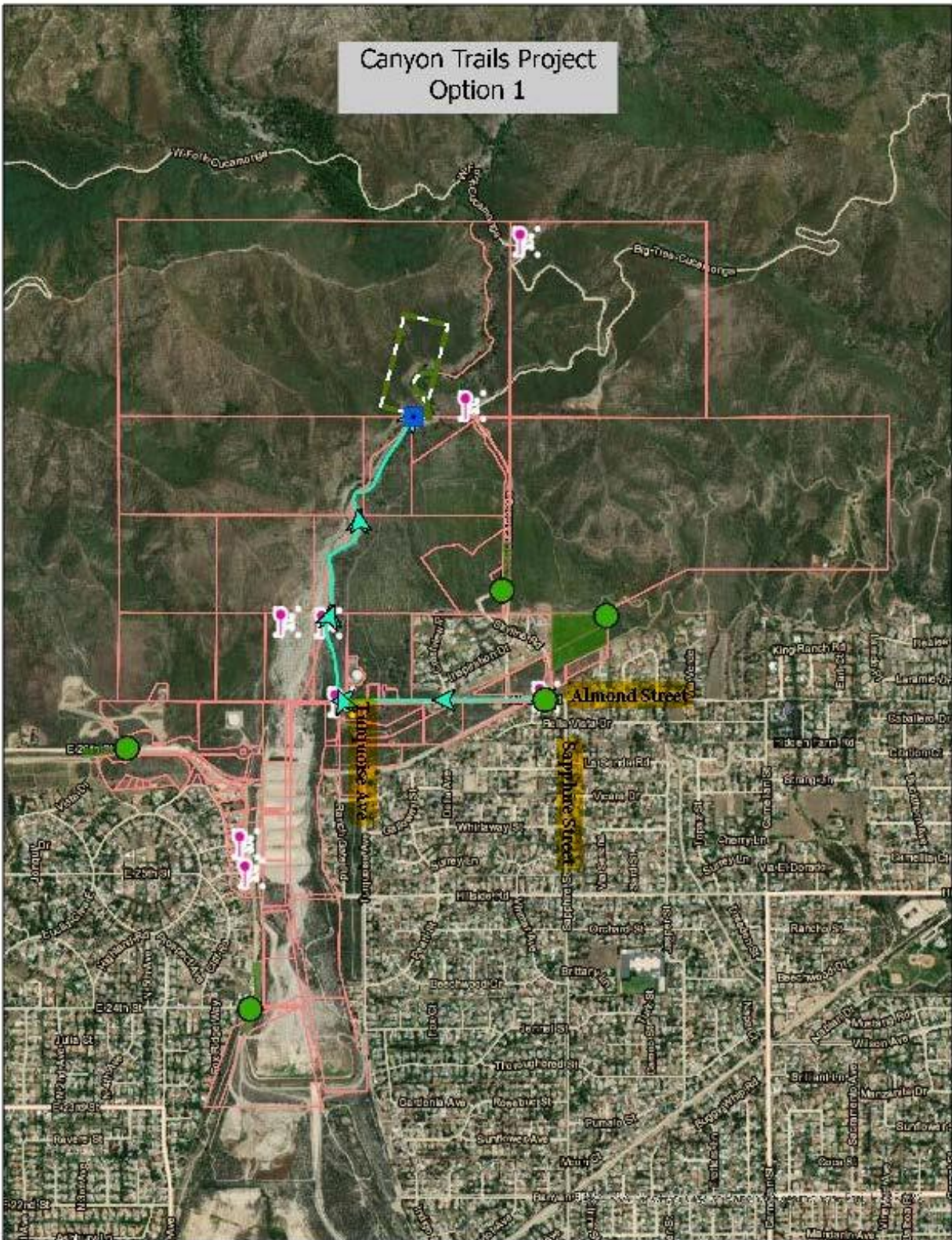
- Uses existing 25 parking spaces
- Safest route of travel.
- Does not require any trail development.

Challenges:

- Requires easement through private LLC Property.
- Requires easement through CVWD mitigation land.



- The Almond dirt road has deteriorated over the last few years and will need to be maintained by the agency with chief jurisdiction in the area.





### Option 2: Almond/Sapphire Street Parking: Big Tree Road Entrance

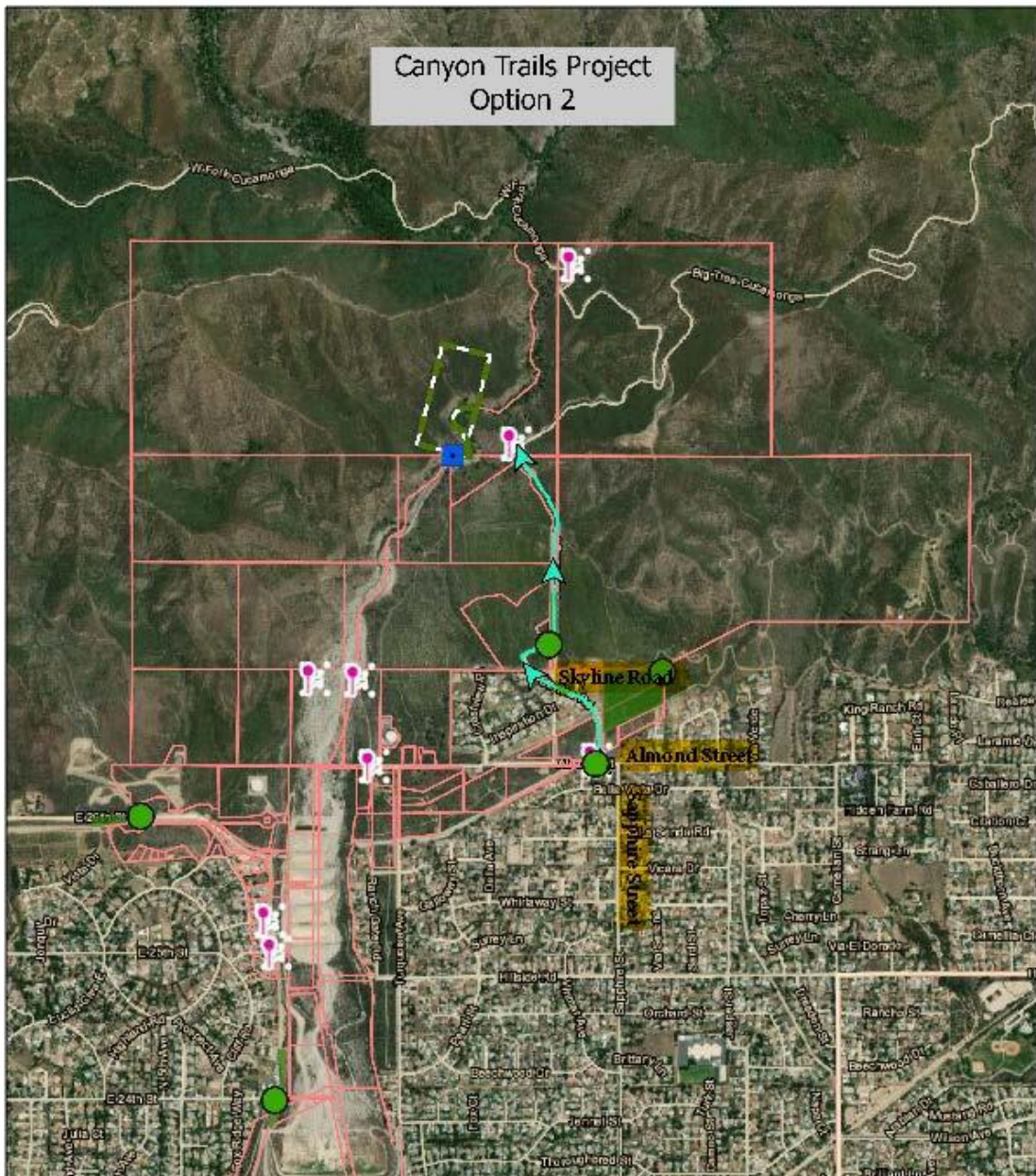
Existing paid parking along Almond and Sapphire with travel route north along Big Tree Road.

Benefits:

- Uses existing street parking.
- Fastest route of travel.

Challenges:

- Requires easement through private LLC Property.
- Requires construction of trail system from party point to canyon floor on CVWD land.



### Option 3: Alternative Parking: Big Tree Road Entrance (2 sub-options)

#### A) Big Tree Road Parking: Big Tree Road Entrance

Efforts to develop a long term strategy and management plan for the recreational use of Cucamonga Canyon have been hindered by the discovery that the Forest Service had apparently “lost” its right-of-way (ROW) easement for public access to the Forest Service boundary through NFSR 1N34 aka Big Tree Road. In order to keep the plan moving forward, the Cucamonga Canyon stakeholders have identified various alternatives for access into the canyon through non-federal land parcels along with advantages and disadvantages to each alternative. However, if the Forest Service regained its ROW easement to Big Tree Rd. from the City of Rancho Cucamonga, this would represent yet another alternative for access:

**Big Tree Road.** San Bernardino National Forest regains its ROW easement (Skyline Rd. to Big Tree Rd.)

Benefits:

- Visitor fee based parking could be established along 1N34, keeping visitors out of the neighborhoods.
- A trailhead on FS land enables better access control, including enforcement of a permit system with daily quotas if needed.
- An FS trailhead could be further developed to provide standard amenities to visitors such as designated parking, trash receptacles, restroom facilities and interpretive and informational signage kiosk.
- Visitors would access the canyon bottom and waterfalls via NFSR 1N35 (aka West Fork Cucamonga Truck Trail), approximately 1.2 miles from Party Point to the creek crossing. This would offer visitors a relatively short, safe route with little additional trail development needed.
- No easement required through LLC land.

Challenges:

- Requires access through a former, no longer existing easement, along Skyline Road.
- This area is within the Cucamonga “C” Inventoried Roadless Area, which may preclude further road development to include a parking lot. However, the experiential benefits of wilderness found at Cucamonga “C” IRA are considered “low” due to disturbance and adjacent urban influences (Per SBNF LMP, 2005).
- An easement for public access through CVWD mitigation land would be required.

#### B) Morgan Ranch Property Parking: Big Tree Road Entrance

Fee based parking at Morgan Ranch Property with travel route north along Big Tree Road. Access to the canyon through CVWD land. Potential long-term solution with dedication of land during final development. A gate would be placed at top of Skyline road.

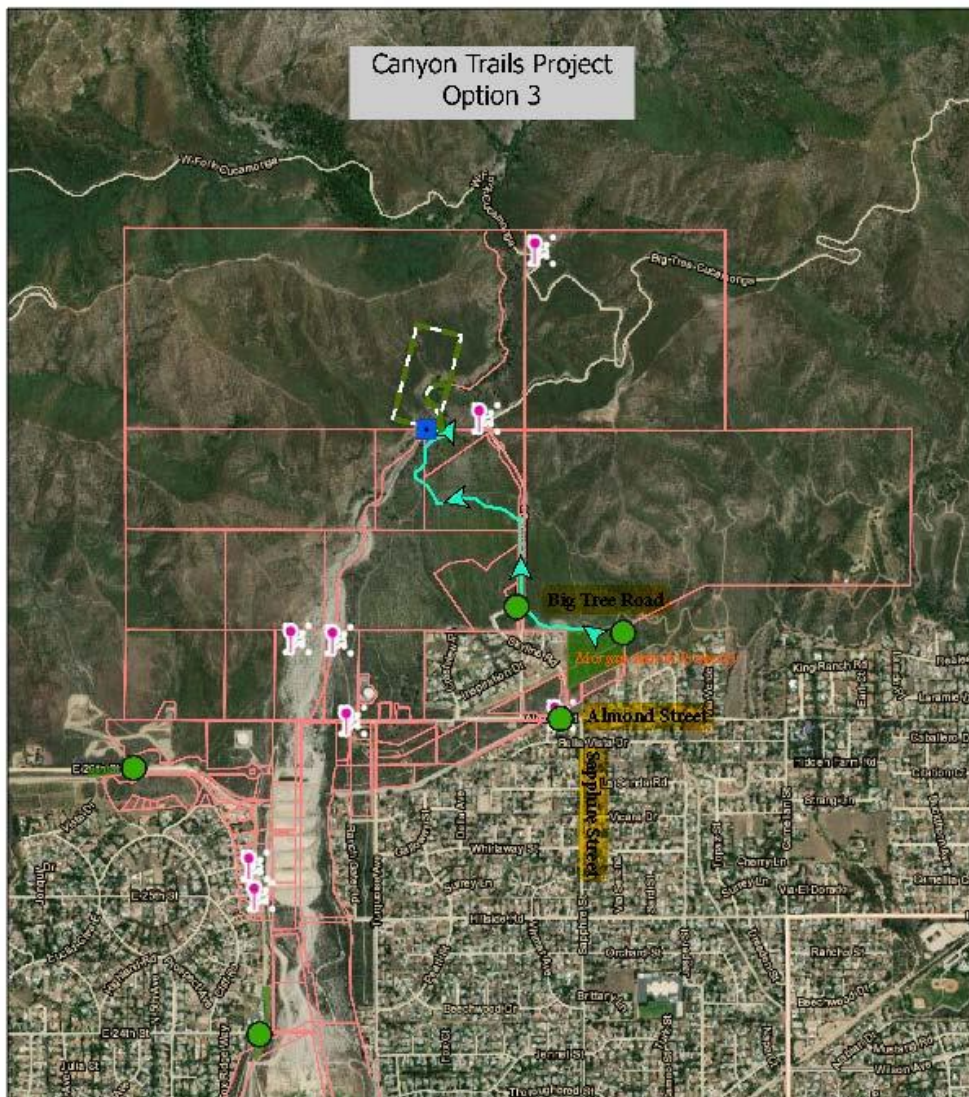


Benefits:

- Least impact of residents.
- Direct route of travel.
- Development has not occurred yet, and land dedication is an option for a long term solution.
- Can reestablish the U.S. Forest Service permanent easement that is on hold pending final development.

Challenges:

- Potentially requires purchase of land.
- Requires construction of trail system from party point to canyon floor.
- Requires infrastructure for road / parking lot.
- Requires easements through King Property.
- An access easement will also be required.



#### **Option 4: 26th Street Parking: Wash Entrance**

Fee based parking can be established along 26th Street with travel route through the wash. The road is currently dirt, but paving is strongly recommended as the increased use will likely require more frequent grading if not paved. The property will require improvements to accommodate a paid parking area.

##### Benefits:

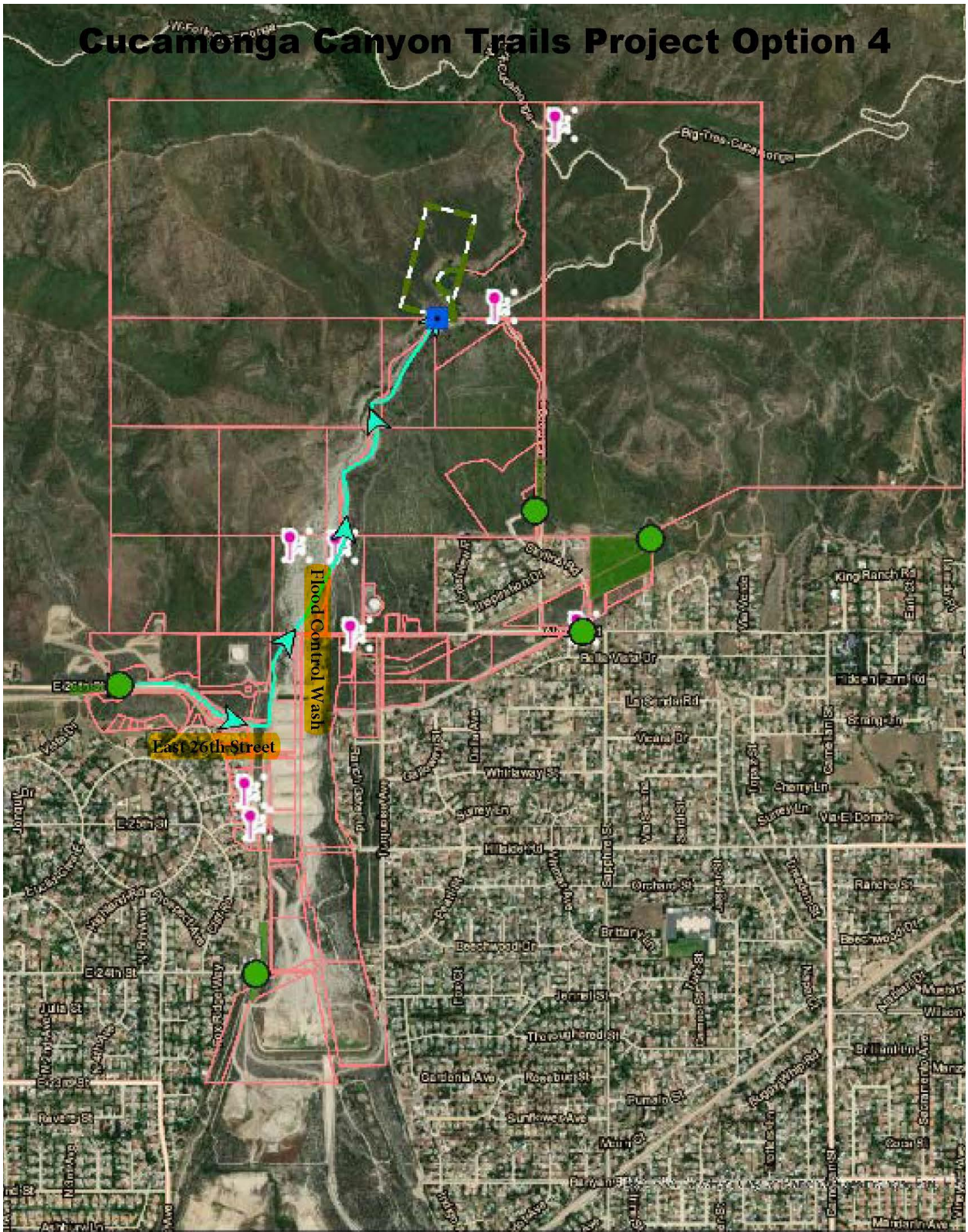
- Safest route of travel when accessed from the west side of the wash.
- Does not require any trail development.
- With the addition of the 25 parking spaces to be installed with Option 4, up to 50 total parking spaces would be available on both sides of the canyon. (25 on the west side of the wash in the County's jurisdiction and 25 on the east side of the wash in the City of Rancho Cucamonga)

##### Challenges:

- Requires parking lot construction.
- Requires easement through LLC Property.
- Requires easement through CVWD mitigation land.
- The road accessing the wash is not a County-maintained road because it is technically a non-maintained public road that the adjacent property owners maintain.

*Map on following page.*







Detail of Parking Area:



Figure 1: Option 4



Figure 2: Option 4 Detail



## Preferred Interim Alternative

The coordinating agencies are at a point where an alternative must be chosen to allow for use of the Cucamonga Canyon. Existing conditions are such that the permanent alternative is not an option at this point, and an Interim Alternative will be chosen.

The existing condition is such that regardless of an option chosen, ultimately access to the hiking trail within Federal Forest Management Jurisdiction can only be gained through private property. Under this existing condition, a combination of Option 1 and Option 4 can be implemented in the immediate future to accommodate the need for parking and enforcement.

The ideal permanent access route would be Option 3. This scenario could come to fruition through land dedication at the time of development or through land acquisition should resources be identified for the purchase of the necessary land through which to allow access. However, at such time as the Cucamonga Canyon Management Plan is implemented, the parties will work cooperatively to secure legal access by a combination of access points identified in Options 1 and 4.

### Recommendations for Implementation of Preferred Interim Alternative:

- Create paid parking restrictions and work with surrounding neighborhoods as modeled by the Claremont loop. Create a parking fee structure similar to that implemented within the jurisdiction of RC, understanding that the fee structure would be specifically to manage the number of people and not pay for resources. The County should consider a tow rather than a citation as a deterrent.
- Parking fines have been increased in an effort to make the fines consistent across jurisdictional boundaries.
- Develop a plan to deal with "Spill Over." If the paid parking area fills and people begin parking in the residential neighborhoods, there needs to be a way to distinguish between residents and those there for recreational purposes. Models could include the Claremont Loop and Mount Rubidoux.
- County to consider budgeting for increasing enforcement during peaks from Memorial Day through Labor Day specifically.
- Forest Service can also manage capacity limit by selling passes. Several models exist such as Cedar Creek. This would have added benefit of providing information in case of natural disaster such as the number of people accessing the falls at any particular time.
- Passes sold by USFS may only be needed, at least initially, from Memorial Day to Labor Day. This time frame represents the busiest time of the year, given school summer breaks and the weather conducive to hiking.
- This method would likely require USFS to establish a 'trail host', similar to a camp host, and establish a location for the trail host to set up their trailer. This is similar to what was done at Cedar Creek in San Diego.
- The trail host location would be best on the west side, where the parking is.
- Create a plan for addressing traffic issues that will likely occur with the opening of the parking areas. Rancho Cucamonga Police Department would be requested for the City

of Rancho Cucamonga jurisdiction access, and CHP and County Sherriff would respond for the County jurisdiction access. Agencies need to coordinate on the most efficient and effective means of addressing and responding to calls for service.

### **Law Enforcement Plan**

Three jurisdictions and four law enforcement agencies currently share the responsibility of responding to areas surrounding and within Cucamonga Canyon.

3 Jurisdictions:

- City of Rancho Cucamonga
- County of San Bernardino
- US Forest Service

4 Law Enforcement Agencies:

- Rancho Cucamonga Police Department (RCPD)
- County Sheriff's Department
- United States Forest Service (USFS) Law Enforcement
- California Highway Patrol (CHP)

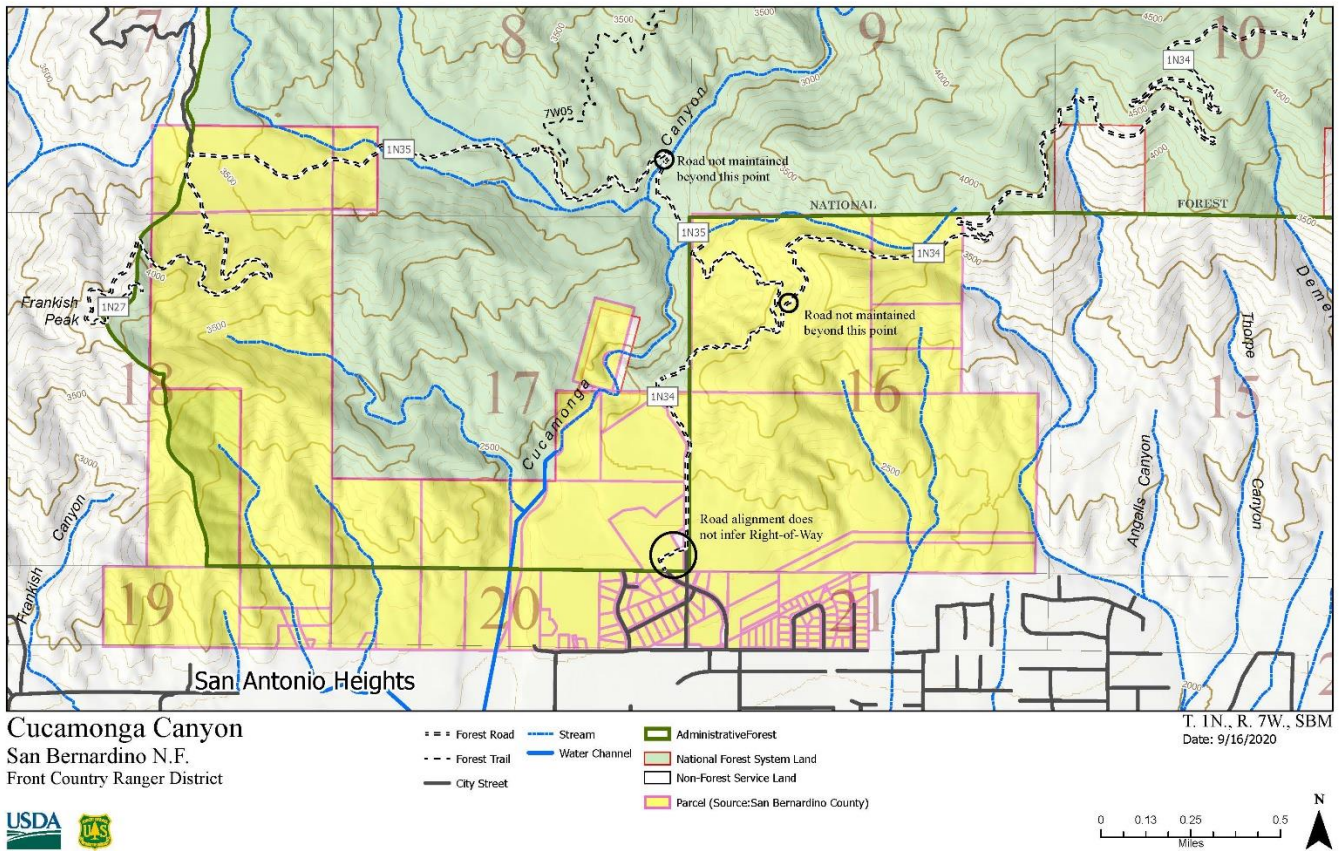
### **Law Enforcement Existing Condition**

The existing area in need of response encompasses the west side of the flood control channel, as well as the residential area within the County of San Bernardino (San Antonio Heights). RCPD responds to two locations as a courtesy to the Fontana Sheriff's Station: San Antonio Heights and the Cucamonga Canyon. This is an attempt to prevent long response times due to the distance of the locations and the Sherriff's Station (17 miles, 25 minutes sans traffic). Currently, the Cucamonga Canyon is closed to public access which limits calls for service, but that is subject to change. The area north of Almond on the east side of the wash is county area normally within the Fontana Sheriff's jurisdiction; however, now the County pays RCPD to provide law enforcement to the "Front Country" (Cucamonga Canyon, North Etiwanda Preserve and Snowdrop Road between Archibald Ave. and Haven Ave.). Additionally, the USFS Law Enforcement Officers provide enforcement to some of the area but they cover a large geographic area and may not be within proximity to respond to calls for service.

### **Law Enforcement Proposed Condition**

The proposed condition will create new access points from the west side through San Antonio Heights. This will create a condition in which the closest Sheriff's station is still the Fontana Station, and the distance will increase to responds to calls. RCPD will likely not respond to calls from the west side of the flood control channel as it is out of their jurisdiction and the new distance will result in higher response times and lower the standard of care established by the City. This is unacceptable. CHP is the default law enforcement agency assigned to this region. County Sheriff's anticipate that traffic issues would be dispatched to CHP and response times could be long as the distance from the station to the outlined region is roughly 17 miles. This translates to a 25 minute response time, sans traffic. Additionally, the staff at the Fontana station are spread thin and response times would be significant from the Alder and Arrow locations.

## U.S. Forest Service Lands



### Area Description

The area is characterized by a canyon with steep, rocky sides and strewn with large boulders. The approach to the canyon is through a large, flat mesa. The Mediterranean climate of southern California affects vegetation types and water availability, though perennial water is present in Cucamonga Creek. Chaparral is the most dominant plant community. Canyon and coast live oaks along with big cone Douglas-fir grow along the shaded slopes of the canyons. Deciduous trees and shrubs occupy riparian areas.

There are two major (lower and upper) waterfalls and one minor (middle) waterfall in Cucamonga Canyon, collectively referred to as Sapphire Falls. Access to the upper falls requires travel down canyon at or near the 1N35 forest road crossing or up-canyon from the lower falls. Either access is considered dangerous for almost all visitors. Inter-waterfall travel requires unpermitted, user-installed climbing ropes as does access to the creek from the steep, unstable canyon rim. Access to the main falls area has typically been on a route, not an established trail. An established trail with tread on the canyon floor would be subject to periodic, intense flooding and scouring, even with stream bridges and trail catwalks.



## Recreation Use

The primary visitor use in this area has been dispersed recreation. This includes water play along Cucamonga Creek and the three Sapphire Falls within. People build small dams, wade in the creek, jump in the plunge pools, and scramble beside and up the waterfalls.

No specific daily visitation use has been recorded; however, anecdotal evidence suggests use levels at the falls throughout 2013 and 2014 frequently reached 100-200 people, and exceeded 400 people on peak days.

When the Forest Service closure was not in place, some impacts to the area were noted. User-created trails were expanded. Litter and human waste was left behind. These activities damaged vegetation, caused soil erosion, degraded riparian areas and water quality, and impacted the area's other natural features. Visitors often trespassed onto private property along the adjacent city streets. Parking, while regulated with a fee, caused congestion and when spaces were not available, visitors parked in driveways and along residential streets. There were incidents of vandalism to Water District structures and other private property in the area. Some visitors brought dogs, on or off leash.







## Emergency Response Services

In 2013, calls for emergency service reached an all-time high for the Rancho Cucamonga Fire Protection District, with 24 total responses. There were 17 medical emergencies including one fatality. The medical emergencies ranged from trauma due to falls from excessive heights, heat related illness, sprains, cuts and abrasions. Four of the rescues required a hoist evolution from San Bernardino County Sheriff Air Rescue. Due to the remote and inaccessible locations to most of the victims, emergency crews are required to hike into the canyon to provide emergency care. The rescues require numerous emergency personnel to respond and can last several hours. In turn, this has a significant draw down effect on Fire and Law Enforcement personnel from the City of Rancho Cucamonga.

The combined law enforcement efforts between the San Bernardino County Sheriff and USFS also saw a significant increase in citations and arrests in 2013. In addition, there were 585 citations with 44 arrests, in addition there were 678 parking citations issued for illegal parking.

The physical location and isolation of Sapphire Falls in regards to agency management and enforcement efforts, as well as recent social media publicity, contributed to other impacts including alcohol/drug use, extreme physical activity (jumping from cliffs into water pools, climbing up cliffs and waterfalls), illegal camping, campfires, and posting an enormous amount of graffiti on canyon walls.

## USFS Forest Closure Ordered

A Forest Closure Order was enacted in August, 2013 for 1650 acres of Cucamonga Canyon due to severe drought, dry conditions and limited evacuation routes in the event of a wildfire. A new Forest Order was issued April 8, 2014, opening the trail only from Big Tree Road to the stream crossing. The forest area off the trail, including Sapphire Falls, remains closed through April 2021.

Depending on current needs and staffing availabilities, a USFS Fire Prevention Technician, a Law Enforcement Officer, and a County Sheriff patrol on an irregular basis depending on canyon needs and their workloads and priorities. Citations, however, are issued on a regular basis for violating the Forest Order.

The canyon closure, enforcement efforts and social media outreach have resulted in a significant decrease in the number of visitors in the canyon. Rancho Cucamonga Fire District's calls for service have dropped from 24 in 2013 to just one in 2017. The Sheriff's Department reported 245 citations and 7 arrests in 2014. No citations have been issued since the closure order has been enacted from 2017-2019.

Despite the closure, people are still visiting the area. This use is mostly gang-related, with people traveling from urban areas to "tag" the rock faces. Violence and drug use has been associated with this visitation.

## Volunteers

The Cucamonga Foothills Preservation Alliance (CFPA) is a volunteer group comprised of 18 dedicated members and nearly 500 signed volunteers. They are engaged in canyon clean-up



efforts and have also spent time meeting with and talking to visitors, encouraging their responsible behavior. They have volunteered thousands of hours picking up trash and removing graffiti in an effort to return the canyon back to its natural beauty.

Figure 3. Graffiti cleanup in the canyon



**Health and Safety:** Concerns center on extreme environment (heat/dryness/wind, lack of drinking water, elevation gain/loss, risk of being trapped by a fast-moving wildfire, rattlesnakes, ticks, poison oak). Cell phone coverage is very limited. Search and rescue operations/fatality recoveries occur regularly when the area is open to the public. There are no sanitation facilities for visitors to use before/after their hike or in the canyon itself. There is no potable water available for visitors at any point. There are currently a few trash cans along Almond Street and Skyline Road, provided by the City.

This unit lies within the Wildland/Urban Interface (WUI). The potential for wildfire is high. In the past, visitors have illegally constructed fires/fire rings in the canyon. There are nearby homes on private land partially surrounded by large fields of chaparral. In addition, visitors could easily become trapped in this dead-end canyon. Hazards for responding emergency personnel could be extreme.



Figure 4: Illegal Campfire

**Resource concerns:** The canyon is habitat for two endangered species: the southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) and historic habitat for the mountain yellow-legged frog (*Rana muscosa*). This is proposed critical habitat for the California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica*). There is habitat for the arroyo toad (*Bufo californicus*) from the Forest boundary south.

This is home range for the Forest Service Region 5 sensitive San Gabriel bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis nelsoni*). There are territories for Forest Service Region 5 sensitive California spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis occidentalis*). Forest Service Management Indicator Species such as mountain lion (*Puma concolor*), mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), California spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis occidentalis*) and song sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) all have habitat in this area.

Floristic surveys have not been conducted throughout this area. There are no known threatened or endangered species within the canyon. A newly discovered plant subspecies, Jokerst's monardella (*Monardella australis* ssp. *jokerstii*), occurs on the south face of Cucamonga Peak. The range of this species is very small and it is only known from three localities in the southeastern San Gabriel Mountains, one of which has not been seen since 1952.

There are concerns about possible visitor access to the Cucamonga Valley Water District open water intake location in the lower canyon. The canyon is an important water source for the



valley. The Upper Cucamonga Creek watershed is rated Functioning at Risk (2.7) in the Watershed Analysis prepared for the Forest Plan. Multiple factors contribute to this rating including: population pressure on recreation, road and trail issues and partially decommissioned roads, type conversion from frequent fires and resulting landslides, 303(d) listings, water diversions for downstream community use, and atmospheric deposition from high population pressure.

**Cultural resources:** Most of Cucamonga Canyon has not been previously surveyed for cultural resources. The presence of prehistoric sites is highly likely based on topography and the availability of water. Culturally sensitive plants that were gathered by Serrano Indians occur.

## Existing Management Direction

### Forest Service Lands

Forest Plan management direction for the canyon applies only to National Forest System lands and does not apply to other federal, state, or private lands.

The National Forest portion of the area is classified as a Backcountry Non-Motorized land use zone, open to dispersed recreation use. There have been no Forest or District management plans written for this specific area. However, the San Bernardino National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan, 2006) divided NFS lands under geographic areas called “Places”. The project area is part of the Front Country Place. The Front Country is a ‘Key Place’ identified representing the most picturesque locations. This Place possesses a distinct landscape character and is particularly valued for its scenic quality.

The following desired conditions apply to this Place:

*Desired Condition: The Front Country Place is maintained as a natural appearing landscape that functions as a first impression scenic backdrop for the Los Angeles/San Bernardino/Rancho Cucamonga metropolitan area, and a national forest portal for its 15 million residents. The valued landscape attributes to be preserved over time include the rugged and wild appearing mountain silhouettes, dramatic undisturbed views to urban and mountain landscapes especially from trails and roads, coast live oaks and bigcone Douglas-fir along the shaded slopes of the canyons, and a well-defined age-class mosaic in chaparral.*

*Vegetation characteristics provide high quality habitat for Nelson's bighorn sheep, deer and raptors. Property lines are located and managed.*

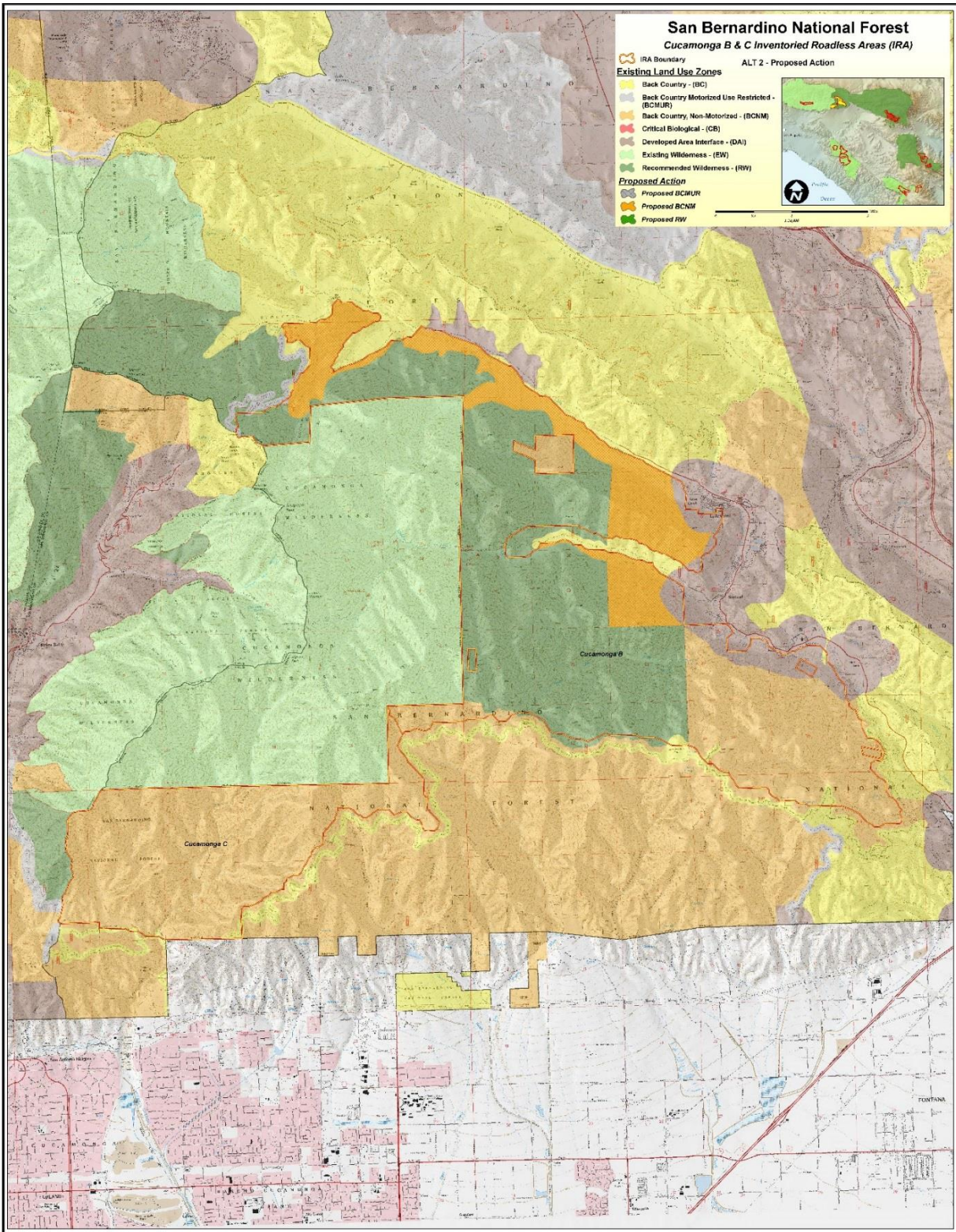
*Program Emphasis: Community protection from fire is of the highest priority. It will be emphasized through public education, fire prevention and fuels management in cooperation with city, county and state agencies. Management will focus on community protection, dispersed recreation use, and national forest infrastructure that is sustainable, consistent with the natural setting and integrity, and has minimal effects to species of management concern and their habitat, including low elevation riparian areas. Forest health and water needs will be managed to provide for a healthy forest ecosystem with the in-stream flows necessary to support surface and subsurface resources. Uses will be balanced and promote the conservation of resource qualities that sustain these uses and provide attractions for this area.*

*There will be a focus on the development of low-elevation trails, interpretive opportunities, prescribed burning to improve bighorn sheep habitat, day-use recreation, and conservation with other agencies for management of coastal sage habitat. Monitoring bighorn sheep and sheep habitat response to the Grand Prix and Padua Fires of 2003 will be a priority, as well as building community relationships in the fire-affected communities. Law enforcement activities will be coordinated with other functional areas for the protection of national forest resources and the safety of national forest visitors and employees and jurisdictions.*

The USFS portion of the canyon falls within the Cucamonga C Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA). Inventoried Roadless Areas refer to those areas identified and mapped in accordance with the Roadless Area Conservation Final Rule (the '2001 Roadless Rule'). Reference 36 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 294 and 66 Federal Register 3244-3272 (Jan. 12, 2001). The definition of a roadless area for the 2001 Roadless Rule included: undeveloped areas typically exceeding 5,000 acres that met the minimum criteria for wilderness consideration under the Wilderness Act and that were inventoried during the Forest Service's Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE II) process, subsequent assessments, or forest planning.



Figure 5. Cucamonga B and C IRAs



The full description of this IRA is located in the Forest Plan. Highlights relevant to the management of the canyon and trail system are listed below.

Approximately 96% of the IRA is managed to maintain a High Scenic Integrity Objective (SIO) in which the landscape appears unaltered to the casual observer. There are no permanent improvements in the IRA. Human occupation and modification of the area, including evidence of structures, construction, and habitations are present in the greater Inland Empire in the valley to the south. Views of and sounds from Interstate 210, State highways and local roads are evident at times and from certain vantage points and are somewhat intrusive and pervasive as this unit is close to the southern Forest boundary.

The roadless area was described in the Forest Plan as having low to moderate feelings of solitude, the opportunity to experience isolation from sights, sounds, and the presence of others from the developments and evidence of humans. Physical and mental challenge, a spirit of adventure and awareness, and a sense of self-reliance and inspiration are low to moderate. Cucamonga C is somewhat remote for southern California and the area offers some isolation and thus low to moderate adventure, excitement, challenge, initiative, and self-reliance. Steep slopes preclude much cross-country travel. Recent major wildfires have altered the vegetative mosaic, creating a pattern of younger vegetation and open spaces in places. It is possible to somewhat feel a part of nature, to have a vastness of scale and a degree of challenge and risk while using outdoor skills that are measures of primitive and unconfined recreation one might find in other southern California wilderness including the adjacent Cucamonga Wilderness.

### **Recreation Opportunity Spectrum**

The Forest Service uses the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) to classify and describe a range of recreation opportunities available. The recreational settings are described on a continuum ranging from Primitive to Urban (ROS Users Guide, USDA 1986).

The ROS is a system of classifications based on a range of recreation settings and probable activities that contribute toward the goal of providing a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities. A ROS setting is defined as the combination of physical, biological, social, and managerial conditions that give value to a place. By combining variations in these conditions it is possible to provide a diversity of recreational settings for visitors to enjoy.

The Forest Plan designates Cucamonga Canyon as Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM). With a designation of SPNM, rustic and rudimentary facilities are primarily for site protection. There is a high probability of experiencing solitude, closeness to nature, tranquility, self-reliance, challenge, and risk. There are a minimum of site controls; restrictions are present, but subtle.

### **Cucamonga Valley Water District Lands**

A portion of the Cucamonga Canyon floor is in Cucamonga Valley Water District land ownership. Significant infrastructure exists there, including roads, fences, water tanks, buildings, machinery, pipelines and an exposed water intake. Farther up canyon is an abandoned stream gauge. Some illegal access has been occurring through Water District Lands, from San Antonio Heights and across the canyon floor.

Desired conditions/guidance for Cucamonga Valley Water District: Protection of the District's water rights, resources, and facilities are of the highest priority taking into account the



importance of providing high quality and reliable water service to the District's customers. Any and all standards, guidelines, management approaches, indicators and thresholds shall not interfere with the rights and obligations of the District to unitize the District lands, water rights and water supplies in the Cucamonga Canyon.

### **City of Rancho Cucamonga Lands**

The Northwest Corner Rancho Cucamonga Zoning and General Plan (2015) identified the area as Open Space and Hillside Residential.

**Open Space** Designations identify areas devoted to the preservation of natural spaces and outdoor recreation. These are designed to promote the retention of open space for recreation use and the protection of natural resources, establish protection in areas of fire, geologic, seismic, or flood hazards through restriction of intensive uses.

**Hillside Residential** areas are designated to maintain the natural open space character of sensitive areas in the sphere of influence and to protect natural landforms from extensive grading and minimize erosion; and to provide for public safety against wildland fire, fault, and flooding hazards, and to provide design standards that allow for limited residential development that respects and responds to the sensitive environmental conditions in the hillsides, and to promote the preservation of open spaces that protect natural features, offer views to residents, and maintain open areas where flood, fire, geologic, and seismic conditions may endanger public health and safety.



## **Relationship to Other Federal Land Management or Regulatory Agencies**

Interagency cooperation is necessary to manage the canyon. Cooperation, coordination, and inter agency planning needs to be ongoing to achieve future management objectives (access, trailheads, trails, facilities, etc.) and to ensure consistency in management and enforcement. The Forest Service is also required to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries concerning how forest management activities may affect threatened and endangered species.

## **Relationship to Tribal Governments**

San Manuel Band of Mission Indians are local, and USFS will reach out and consult with Tribal Governments for any proposed project work to obtain their input.

## **Relationship with Private Landowners**

The only access from any direction on the east side of the wash is through private property. As discussed in the “Access” section, legal access will need to be established should the east side of the wash be determined the preferred access alternative.

## **Cucamonga Canyon Management Direction**

Opening the canyon area to responsible, sustainable recreation provides many opportunities, including the following:

- Responsible public enjoyment
- Protect natural resources-habitat and biodiversity
- Protect water quality and water supply
- Protect private property owners in the management boundary
- Reduce graffiti and trash
- Protect local communities from visitor impacts
- Provide an idea of what public lands mean and their importance
- Access to a rugged, but close area that is also a local treasure
- End displacement of responsible people who do not want to currently visit due to issues
- Opportunity to educate people on stewardship, value and volunteerism
- Changing the culture: encouraging responsible use and enjoyment

The following desired conditions, standards, guidelines, and management approaches allow for these opportunities to be met.

## **Desired Conditions**

Cucamonga Canyon will be a place for safe, responsible and environmentally sustainable recreation while protecting the watershed and other natural resources. The canyon will be a place where the land dictates the experience, preserving the rugged feel of the area.

While risk can never be completely eliminated due to environmental conditions, the culture will change so that families, youth, and local residents can enjoy the canyon with the expectation of safety and security. The quality of life for local residents and visitors will be preserved.

The canyon will be a showpiece for success in multi-agency cooperation and management.

Recreation opportunities, including products, services, and the built environment, support the needs and expectations of the diverse population in the surrounding area, including urban visitors, youth, people with disabilities, aging populations, and different ethnic groups.

Youth are engaged in outdoor recreation and conservation education opportunities, fostering the next generation of public land stewards.

Signs are universal and public information and education is multilingual to ensure communication is intentional, meets information needs, and conveys a message of public access for all.

Habitat conditions are stable or improving over time as indicated by the status of focal species.

### Standards:

- All other access other than the official portal shall be closed.
- Campfires shall not be allowed on any portion of the trail system or the canyon.
- Pets shall not be allowed unless on leash.
- Horses are allowed everywhere, including cross country travel.
- Overnight camping shall be prohibited.
- The trail and road shall be open to non-motorized use only except for administrative motorized use to provide for health and safety and watershed management.
- The trail and canyon shall be closed from dusk to dawn.
- No unauthorized building of dams/interference with the free flow of water shall be allowed.
- The cliff area surrounding Sapphire falls and the two upper Sapphire Falls (need legal description) shall be closed to public use. No cliff diving shall be allowed.
- The possession and consumption of alcohol shall not be allowed. Illegal controlled substances are prohibited on NFS lands, including marijuana.
- *Private property standards to go here (e.g. barriers)*
- *Parking lot/amenities to go here (e.g. bottled water, trash receptacles, host)*
- The parking lot shall have 46 spaces, and there will be paid parking along Sapphire and Almond Avenues on the east side of the wash. Specific location and number of parking spaces addressed in the “Access” section of the document. No overnight parking shall be allowed.

### Guidelines:

- The trail in the inner canyon should be more of a route than an established trail, based on the changing environmental conditions (fire, flood, etc.).
- Any trail construction should be for the primary purpose of relocating public use to protect private property, reduce resource damage and retains as much vegetation as possible, fits with the topography, and is consistent with riparian function.
- The trail should be marked with cairns in the inner canyon or low profile signs elsewhere only where needed to keep people on the main route. Creek crossings should be marked with cairns to keep people on the main route.



- The trail should only be maintained for safety reasons and not upgraded past a Class 2 on NFS lands (see Appendix B for a definition of Class 2 trails).
- The trail should be defined, hardened, replanted, relocated, or closed where unacceptable impacts to riparian vegetation, stream banks, or water quality occurs. Unacceptable impacts are identified by de-vegetation beyond normal tread width, loss of bank stability, exposed tree roots, loss of overhanging bank structure, lack of trail definition or multiple parallel trails, or point source erosion.
- Wrecked, rusting vehicle carcasses that impede visitor access and present safety hazards should be cleaned up or removed as soon as possible.
- All existing and new graffiti should be covered over and/or sandblasted as soon as possible by an agency determined at a future date.
- Staffing of parking lots will be decided upon a later date
- A safety railing or barrier at Party Point should be constructed.
- Any trailhead constructed should include vehicle parking spaces, trashcans, bulletin board and a sanitation facility. It should also include a staff or volunteer host during heavy use weekends and holidays.
- A maximum group size should be established if it is determined that large groups are causing resource or social impacts due to the size of the group.
- 80% of the time, there should be no more than 20-25 people at one time at the main Sapphire Falls area. Occupancy limitations would be dictated by parking limitations.
- There should be no more than five minutes wait time for people to pass on the trail in narrow spots or at water crossings.
- Proposals for outfitting and guiding special use permits or recreation event permits may be approved only when the special use or event is consistent with desired conditions, and when a need is identified. This applies to special tour groups, hiking clubs, and other large groups. A system will be implemented and a point of contact for parking and permitting appointed.

### **Management Approaches:**

- Work with gateway communities and local partners to manage potential impacts.
- Implement monitoring metrics and adaptive management. If social and resource impacts lessen over time, consider reducing visitor restrictions.
- All appropriate visitor regulatory and safety signing in the Cucamonga Canyon area (as well as handouts and interpretive panels) shall be bilingual - Spanish.

- Implement saturation multi-jurisdiction law enforcement sweeps during heavy use periods. Cite and/or arrest offenders as needed.
- Implement design features so that the parking area minimizes damage to resources and prevents increased erosion.
- Cooperate closely with volunteers from Cucamonga Foothills Preservation Alliance and other interested organizations and parties for canyon clean-up, patrol, information and education.
- Commit to adequate law enforcement coverage, especially on weekends and holidays.
- Provide sufficient visitor amenities (i.e., sanitation, trash, and information/education panels and bulletin boards).
- Conduct outreach to find community partners in the valley and proactively use social media to help influence visitors so that they become more environmentally aware and responsible when they visit the canyon. Create an official Forest Service/City/Sheriff internet video to inform the public about responsible recreation in the canyon and make available through social media web sites.
- Consider the use of temporary area closure orders when extreme conditions (such as high heat, fire, red flag days, or flash flooding) are expected, for the duration of the event
- Signage maintenance and installation will be decided upon a later date
- The management and coordination of Law Enforcement Sweeps will be decided upon a later date
- Consider the following elements the best medium for educating visitors on the following topics:
  - The length and difficulty of the hike to Sapphire Falls
  - How to prepare for the hike, including proper attire and footwear, and the need to bring adequate food and water
  - Local weather patterns and potential hazards along the trail and at the falls
  - Area regulations, including the alcohol prohibition and closure of cliff faces at the falls
  - Proper techniques for the disposal of human waste and trash along the trail and in the vicinity of water bodies (“Leave No Trace” and “Pack it in, pack it out” practices)
  - Limiting resource impacts by staying on designated trails
  - Respecting wildlife , plant communities, water sources and water quality
  - How to report illegal activities
  - No using local residential trash cans, hoses or private property
- Consider implementing a permit system should monitoring indicate that desired conditions are being exceeded.

## Capacity

Social capacity is the level of use beyond which social impacts such as crowding and conflict exceed desired conditions. Environmental or resource capacity occurs when biophysical factors

cannot withstand a level of use, thereby creating unacceptable changes to resources such as soils and vegetation. These biophysical and social desired conditions are judgments that managers must make, with appropriate input from stakeholders.

This analysis considered available data, visitor use patterns, known resource and social issues, and desired conditions.

The limiting factor to capacity in Cucamonga Canyon is the social experience at Sapphire Falls. This is a very small area, hemmed in by steep rock walls. There is limited space here for people to sit, swim, and “hang out”. Should this area become too crowded, people could begin climbing above the falls to find privacy. Others could be discouraged from seeing the falls. Displacement from the area could result in increased impacts at other sites.

### **Capacity at Similar Sites**

Cedar Creek Falls on the Cleveland National Forest sees an average of approximately three people per vehicle travel to the area. Vehicles in the parking lot turn over once daily (one parking space provides parking for two vehicles in a given day). The management plan for CCF set a daily limit of 75 people, which was based on balancing resource and social impacts.

Three Sisters Falls, on the same forest, does not currently have a limit on numbers of people per day due to less use than CCF and plateauing visitation. A 60-80 vehicle lot was proposed for that area.

### **Traveling and destination time**

The average visitor would take about an hour to an hour and a half to reach the falls area. Because hiking speeds vary, it is expected that groups, even those beginning the hike at the same time, would spread out along the trail.

The average amount of time to stay at the falls is typically about one to two hours. The majority of visitors would likely be congregated between the hours of 10 and 4 pm. Assuming a twice daily turnover and a similar vehicle capacity as CCF, seven vehicle loads of people could leave from the parking lot at the same time in order to keep the total number of people at the falls area 21 or below. Since it is likely that arrival times to the parking lot would be somewhat staggered, it is estimated that a lot size for 50 vehicles (150 people) would be appropriate for this area. This could allow a maximum of 150 people per day, though it is likely that vehicle turnover and party size could vary, as well as visitation during cooler months.



Figure 7. Typical crossing on canyon route.



## Implementation and Monitoring

The rate of implementation of this plan will be determined by the amount of funding available and the capacity of our organization, our volunteers, and our partners. The following guidelines should be used to help set priorities for allocation of funding and staff time:

- 1) Public safety.
- 2) Protection of the natural and cultural resources within the canyon.

3) Activities that implement the decisions of this plan which receive outside or cooperative funding, have partners, or advance public stewardship would likely be given a higher priority.

## Appendix A. Key Indicators, Measures, Thresholds and Management Actions

Key Indicator	Measure	Threshold	Sampling Procedure and Frequency	Possible Management Actions Considered if Conditions are Not Met
Free flow of Cucamonga Creek	No obstruction to free-flow	No unauthorized new dams, diversions, straightening, riprapping or obstructions	Annual observation to ensure no obstructions to free-flow	Removal of obstruction; education of visitors
Water quality meets standards	Standards are set by California's DEQ in compliance with the Clean Water Act	NA	Monthly	Identify possible sources of pollutants Implement corrective actions to reduce pollutants to levels consistent with water quality standards
Graffiti	# of new instances	No new after cleanup prior to lifting of Closure Order	Weekly	Remove using latest technology Cameras Citations
Vandalism	# of new instances	No new	Weekly	Repair immediately Cameras in place Citations Barriers



<b>Key Indicator</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Threshold</b>	<b>Sampling Procedure and Frequency</b>	<b>Possible Management Actions Considered if Conditions are Not Met</b>
Trash	# of pounds of trash collected monthly	>5	Monthly	Education Citations Cameras Closure
Social trails	# of new social trails	No new social trails	Yearly	Education Cameras Citations Close/vegetate
People at one time at the falls	PAOT/Encounters meet the desired condition cited in the capacity analysis	No more than 21 people at one time 80% of the time at falls	Convenience samples	Education Cameras Citations Permit/quota system
Wait time to pass others on the trail	# of minutes people have to wait to pass	No more than 5 minutes/average party	Convenience samples	Education Cameras Citations of large non-permitted groups/clubs Permit/quota system

## **Appendix B. Definition of Terms**

Class 2 trail specifications (from Forest Service Handbook 2309.18) include:

- Tread continuous and discernible, but narrow and rough.
- Single lane, with minor allowances constructed for passing.
- Typically native materials.
- Obstacles may be common, substantial, and intended to provide increased challenge.
- Blockages cleared to define route and protect resources.
- Vegetation may encroach into trailway.
- Structures of limited size, scale, and quantity; typically constructed of native materials.
- Structures adequate to protect trail infrastructure and resources.
- Natural fords.
- Bridges as needed for resource protection and appropriate access.
- Route identification signing limited to junctions.
- Route markers present when trail location is not evident.
- Regulatory and resource protection signing infrequent.

*Add additional terms as needed*

## **Appendix C. Maps and Description of Trail Route**

TBA

## **Appendix D. Legal Description of Sapphire Falls Closures**

TBA