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GREAT REDWOOD TRAIL DRAFT MASTER PLAN RELEASED

Community Engagement Essential to Historic Multi-Use Trail Development

Ukiah, CA (April 3, 2024) — Today, the Great Redwood Trail Agency (GRTA) released the draft Master Plan for the northern stretch of the 307-mile rail-to-trail project connecting San Francisco and Humboldt Bays. The draft Master Plan is informed by broad tribal and community outreach efforts and stakeholder engagement led by Alta Planning + Design, with support from North Coast Opportunities, Redwood Community Action Agency, and Jen Rice, with funding from the State Coastal Conservancy.

The draft Master Plan can be found at GreatRedwoodTrailPlan.org.

The public comment period for the draft plan is open **now until June 3, 2024**. Members of the public are encouraged to provide feedback and participate in the planning process by submitting comments and/or attending community events related to the trail project.

The Great Redwood Trail was created by the State of California, through the efforts of Senate President Pro Tempore Mike McGuire, who represents the North Coast.

"It has been a long journey, preparing for the launch of this draft Master Plan," said Sen. McGuire. "The Great Redwood Trail Agency has hosted numerous community and kitchen table meetings seeking feedback from thousands of neighbors who live near and around this remarkable trail. We are grateful to all of those who provided comments and participated in the meetings."

The draft plan reflects feedback and input from robust tribal and community engagement efforts over the past 16 months, including attendance at 23 community events, six in-person workshops and three online workshops, more than 70 stakeholder meetings and 767 surveys completed. Tribal engagement to date has included attendance at more than a dozen tribal community events, presentations at many tribal government and coalition meetings and workshops, many in-depth conversations with tribal members and leaders, a webinar for tribal leaders and representatives and direct outreach to more than 35 tribes and tribal/native interest associations.

The project team also met with business owners, ranchers, farm bureaus, rural economic development organizations, tourism and visitor bureaus, vineyard owners, houseless service providers, law

enforcement, first responders, trail users, environmental advocates, landowner groups, youth-focused non-profits and local, state and federal agencies.

"As the new Executive Director of GRTA, I'm excited to work in partnership with communities along the trail to develop the Great Redwood Trail Agency into a solid and sustainable agency that leverages resources to create opportunities for improved health, recreation, and economic growth while honoring and supporting the many communities and cultures along the corridor," said Elaine Hogan, Executive Director of GRTA. "I believe this draft Master Plan is an excellent first step in laying out our vision for the Great Redwood Trail, and I welcome input from communities to help design a trail that best serves them."

When complete, the Great Redwood Trail will be the longest multi-use rail-trail in the USA, promoting accessible recreation to California's North Coast region as it connects the communities of Marin, Sonoma, Mendocino, Trinity, and Humboldt counties, creating a transformational economic engine.

"The release of this high-level plan is an exciting moment to recognize the transformation the trail represents for North Coast outdoor recreation, as well as its future economy," said Caryl Hart, PhD, former Chair of GRTA's Board of Directors. "The incredible outreach and meetings that went into this plan show the dedication of our organization to working with our local communities to make this world class trail a reality."

Sterling Kercher, Alderpoint volunteer Fire Chief, logger, builder, and local landowner, said the trail is "a good thing for the community to give them the opportunity to make some money. It's a community thing, to unite us and to bring people together."

The Master Plan will serve as a guiding document to envision and provide a framework for trail user experience, trail design, operations and maintenance, habitat restoration, project priorities, funding, and management of the trail, which will travel through old-growth redwood forests, oak woodlands and vineyards, and the Eel River Canyon.

Equitable access to the Eel River Canyon and beyond is attractive to locals and visitors alike, including Shannon Stillwell, Alderpoint volunteer firefighter and multi-generational resident.

"How can we enjoy the Eel River Canyon if we can't see it?" Stillwell asked. "Our waterways are God-given, and I want my grandkids to be able to hike up the canyon where their ancestors lived and enjoy the natural landscape."

Frazier Haney, Executive Director of the Wildlands Conservancy, added, "the Great Redwood Trail will be a pilgrimage for those who need the solace nature brings— for grieving a loss, seeking new meaning in life, or discerning their own purpose— and our organization is proud to help anchor it with facilities and staff in the Eel River Canyon to the sea."

Segments of the Great Redwood Trail are already built and open to the public in Arcata, Eureka, Blue Lake and Ukiah, with additional segments underway.

Public Comments

The Public comment period on the draft Great Redwood Trail Master Plan is open until June 3, 2024. There are several ways to comment on the draft Master Plan:

- Use the webtool found at [GreatRedwoodTrailPlan.org](https://greatredwoodtrailplan.org). Click an area to add a marker, or click and drag an area to highlight content on which you'd like to comment. Once an area is selected, there's an option to enter your name and comment to complete the process; or
- Leave a comment at the webform at the bottom of the page here: <https://greatredwoodtrailplan.org/>; or
- Send comments by email to info@greatredwoodtrailplan.org; or
- Leave a voicemail message at (707) 440-9445; or
- Attend a community event and share your views with us. Upcoming community meetings will be held on April 9 in Eureka, April 10 in Ukiah, and April 16 online. Additional information and upcoming public meeting dates and times can be found here: <https://greatredwoodtrailplan.org/#events>.

About the Great Redwood Trail Agency (GRTA)

The Great Redwood Trail Agency (GRTA) is a local agency established by the Great Redwood Trail Agency Act, Government Code § 93000 et seq., to develop and manage the Great Redwood Trail and discharge the duties of a rail common carrier before the Surface Transportation Board. The GRTA officially replaced the North Coast Railroad Authority (NCRA) in 2022 and manages the rail corridor in Mendocino, Trinity, and Humboldt counties. The rail corridor in Sonoma and Marin counties and the multi-use SMART Pathway, the southern segment of the Great Redwood Trail, is managed by Sonoma – Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART).

About the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC)

The State Coastal Conservancy is a state agency, established in 1976, to protect and improve natural lands and waterways, to help people get to and enjoy the outdoors, and to sustain local economies along California's coast. The Great Redwood Trail is one of the five flagship trails identified in the Conservancy's 2023-2027 strategic plan. The Conservancy provides staffing and organizational support for the GRTA.

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