

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Quality, Excellence, Innovation

REPORT RECEIVED

Raul M. Rojas
DIRECTOR

October 6, 2020

Marin County Board of Supervisors
3501 Civic Center Drive
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OCT - 6 2020

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BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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SUBJECT: Muir Woods Road Memorandum of Understanding Update
County of Marin and National Park Service

Dear Board Members:

RECOMMENDATION: Accept the report.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the provisions of the Memorandum of Understanding between the County of Marin and National Parks Service dated June 30, 2015, County staff and representatives of the National Park Service (NPS) are providing an update on the activities that have occurred in support of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) since the last community meeting on the MOU efforts was held on December 10, 2019.

DISCUSSION: Prior to the efforts provided through the MOU, visitation to Muir Woods National Monument (Muir Woods) was steadily increasing. The uncontrolled flow of visitors to Muir Woods was overwhelming the transportation infrastructure, including Muir Woods Road and Frank Valley Road. Over the years, the County has worked with various stakeholders including NPS, California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR), Marin Transit, and various other local government organizations and community interest groups to develop solutions. The Muir Woods Shuttle is an example of such a successful element.

In late 2014, Congressman Huffman created an 'ad hoc' group of government, community, and environmental groups to establish a consensus on a path forward to improve traffic congestion and parking problems. The parties worked together and developed a MOU that included goals and objectives, collaboration on the implementation of an NPS parking reservation system, detailed road shoulder parking limits, enhanced parking enforcement, and greater marketing and community outreach.

Two meetings were held in June 2015 by your Board to received public comment on the draft MOU, and after recommended changes were made, the MOU was adopted by your board on June 30, 2015 (attached). NPS subsequently signed the MOU after conducting an Environmental Assessment for the implementation of the Muir Woods Reservation System, soliciting public comment, and releasing a finding of No Significant Impact determination.

Accounting

Airport

Building Maintenance

Capital Projects

Certified Unified Program
Agency (CUPA)

Communications
Maintenance

County Garage

Disability Access

Engineering & Survey

Flood Control &
Water Resources

Land Development

Purchasing

Real Estate

Reprographic Services

Road Maintenance

Stormwater Program

Transportation &
Traffic Operations

Waste Management

Memorandum of Understanding Summary

The MOU creates the framework for the NPS to implement a parking and transportation reservation system as summarized below:

- NPS will create a reservation system for visitors using motorized transportation, including managing tour bus operators.
- NPS will manage the reservation system to limit visitation levels and reduce peak attendance, and associated traffic congestion and parking demand.
- Creates a parking Management Corridor for NPS parking permits along Muir Woods Road/Frank Valley Road between approximately Conlon Parking Lot and Kent Canyon.
- Over the course of seven years, the parking reservation system will allow Muir Road shoulder parking to be prohibited south of the Redwood Creek Bridge (approximately 30 parking spaces will remain between Muir Woods entrance and the concrete bridge).
- Parking enforcement and controls will be enhanced for all of Muir Woods/Frank Valley Road with a cooperative agreement between the Sheriff and National Park Service.
- Both the County and NPS will continue to collaborate to improve Redwood Creek water quality and environmental conditions and will work to improve public transit and public service messaging.

MOU Phasing

The MOU implementation is divided into two main phases. Phase one occurs over the first two years. This phase is for the development of the reservation system by NPS. During this time period, road shoulder parking south of the Redwood creek bridge was reduced to a maximum of 80 spaces during peak periods through additional regulatory parking restrictions, physical barriers, and parking enforcement.

The second phase of the MOU began on January 16, 2018, with the implementation of NPS's reservation system. This phase continues for the next five years through 2023, which is the end of the MOU term. During the first 2 ½ year period, parking is capped at 80 spaces south of the concrete bridge, then for the following 2 ½ year period, to 40 parking spaces. At the end of this time, the reservation system would accommodate all the parking demand and Muir Woods Road shoulder parking would be limited to 30 spaces north of the bridge, and near the Muir Woods Monument entrance, with no parking spaces south of the concrete bridge (up to 400 vehicles previously parked at peak times).

The MOU does allow for use of up to 80 spaces in the last 2 ½ years of the MOU during any NPS off-street parking lot construction periods associated with any upgrade or expanded parking facility work.

MOU Accomplishments

Reservation System: The largest single effort outlined in the MOU has been achieved with the implementation of parking and arrival reservation system by NPS. The MOU focused on traffic operations, parking, and arrival management aspects of Muir Woods National Monument by creating a reservation system that reduces and caps parking demand and peak arrival times. NPS completed a concessionaire procurement process and implemented a reservation system for Muir Woods that includes marketing and outreach, and a one-stop web-based system for both parking and transit reservations. Starting on January 16, 2018, an \$8 parking reservation is now required for each privately-owned vehicle. The system balances visitation levels and parking availability throughout the day.

As part of the overall parking management plan, NPS also reconstructed the commercial vehicle overflow parking area at Conlon Avenue so that it can now be used for general public parking or other needs as the reservation system is implemented. The Muir Woods Shuttle (operated by Marin Transit) is also a key component of the overall parking management and arrival at Muir Woods; shuttle reservations can also be made on the system web site, <http://gomuirwoods.com>. Since 2019, the Muir Woods Shuttle as well as tour bus operators were restricted from using vehicles larger than 30-feet in length on upper Muir Woods Road. Since the length restriction went into effect, the shuttle and tour buses now approach the Muir Woods Monument from Frank Valley Road via Highway One. To accommodate the increased bus traffic on Frank Valley Road an temporary alternating stop control was placed on Frank Valley Road to improve safety until slides downhill of the road can be repaired.

The reservation system started with some challenges including queuing at the parking lot entrances as some visitors have no reservation and parking attendants need to provide instructions. There was also a period of education for the public to grow used to creating a reservation prior to arrival at Muir Woods. This resulted in some cars having to return to four corners to gain cell phone service to make a reservation. This problem has largely been addressed through the continuing education outreach by NPS through signage and electronic communication.

General Coordination: The local governmental agency staffs convened an interagency working group to plan and coordinate all roadside activities. The working group included staff from County, NPS, State Parks, & Sheriff. A construction team was also created to interact during the detail design and construction of the roadside bollards and erosion control measures.

Parking Barriers, Bollards: Public Works Engineering Division prepared construction drawings and NPS contracted and funded the installation of a parking barrier post system along the road to discourage parking in early 2016. Approximately 1200 redwood posts were installed, some with cables added between the posts next to steep shoulder drop-offs for added pedestrian safety. The barrier system extended both above and south of the Muir Woods entrance. The system not only discourages parking but also creates a greater buffer from the creek to allow vegetation to grow. Erosion and sediment control measures were also installed behind the posts in areas that were previously used for parking. Additional delineators were installed south of the concrete bridge when the reservation system began to further discourage parking along the road shoulder.

Additional Parking Restrictions & Higher Fines: In October 2015, your Board adopted additional no parking zones and increased the fines to the maximum allowed of \$99 per violation.

Parking Enforcement: The Sheriff provided authority, through a separate agreement, for NPS to enforce traffic and parking regulations. In doing so, the Sheriff did not relinquish or reduce any of its existing authority. However, this allowed NPS to add parking enforcement staff and parking violation ticketing rates increased until the start of the reservation system. NPS has been actively enforcing parking violations and issuing citations since November 2015, with citations paid through the Marin Parking Authority. Parking citations have declined significantly since the launch of the reservation system as compliance with no parking zones has been better than expected during this period.

Other Future Road Improvements

The County has obtained a Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) grant to reconstruct 2.48 miles of Frank Valley Road from the Muir Woods National Monument entrance to State Route 1 near Muir Beach. Besides repaving the road, this project will result in various landslide and embankment scour repairs, as well as culvert replacements that will decrease sediment load into Redwood Creek and improve overall water quality. The project is currently in the environmental review analysis phase at least through the end Fall 2020, with construction expected to start in 2022. The project cost estimate for design and construction is \$5 million, with an 11.5% local funding match by the County. The projects have been combined in one construction effort managed by the Federal Highway Administration.

Other Infrastructure Improvements and Changes

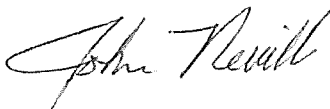
NPS is developing plans to improve or replace the Muir Woods National Monument parking, pedestrian trails, and other arrival facilities. The project will improve and reorganize parking, trails, and other arrival infrastructure to address deferred maintenance, improve safety and visitor experience, and upgrade stormwater management design.

CONCLUSIONS: The MOU milestones for the first five years have been met by all the parties. The County and NPS are committed to meeting future milestones, making steady progress on common goals, and reporting publicly on that progress to all interested stakeholders. The MOU provides for public updates at least twice a year, one before the Board of Supervisors and one at a local community meeting in Southern Marin. Today's report satisfies one of the two annual meetings. The normal meeting that would have been scheduled in Southern Marin was unfortunately not possible this year due to the impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic that prohibited public gatherings.

FISCAL IMPACT: There is no additional impact to the General Fund with this report.

REVIEWED BY:	<input type="checkbox"/>	County Administrator	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Department of Finance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A
	<input type="checkbox"/>	County Counsel	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Human Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A

Respectfully submitted,



John Neville
Associate Civil Engineer

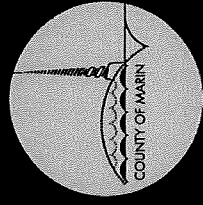
Attachments: Memorandum of Understanding between County of Marin and National Park Service

C: Congressman Jared Huffman, Member of Congress
Laura Joss, General Superintendent
Robert T. Doyle, Sheriff-Coroner
Nancy Whelan, Marin Transit

Muir Woods MOU Update

County of Marin & National Park Service

October 6, 2020



MOU Summary

Goal: Manage peak visitation, reduce traffic congestion, and improve safety

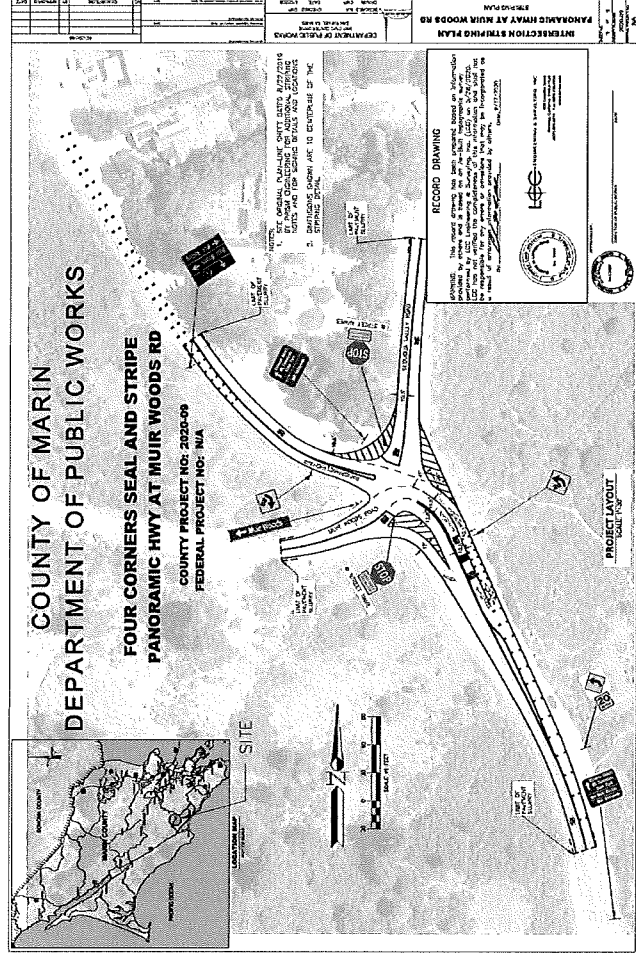
- NPS develops reservation system for private vehicles and commercial carriers; expands shuttle
- County establishes parking management corridor protected by bollards
- Phased parking reduction plan to reduce road shoulder parking to 30 spaces within 7 years
- Parking enforcement authority extended to NPS staff
- Improved public messaging; twice annual public meetings; expanded website

Goal: Protect, preserve, and enhance the health of Redwood Creek watershed

- Redwood Renewal includes a suite of projects to improve conditions in Redwood Creek
- Best management practices guide location and timing of work
- Projects include work in surrounding areas of watershed in Frank Valley corridor and in state park lands

100

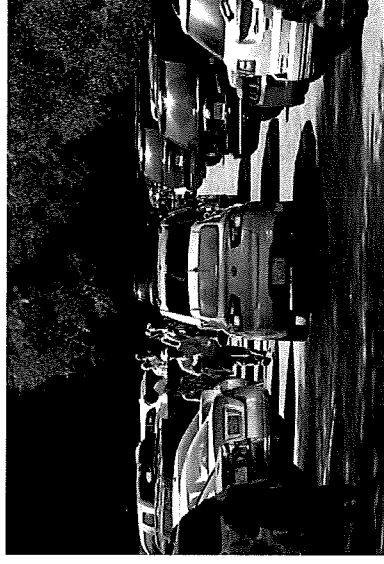
- **April 2020:** Restriped Four Corners Intersection
- **May 2020:** Emergency Culvert Repair near Santos Meadow.



Muir Woods Parking/Shuttle Reservation System

Muir Woods operations during the pandemic:

-
- -The park was closed on 3/13, and reopened on 6/29. Since reopening MUWO, we've been managing visitation by limiting vehicle reservations to 532/day, which is the equivalent of a winter weekday per the EA
- -Daily vehicle limits have been capped for 1800 visitors/day (for contrast, maximum peak day visitation in summer set by EA is either 4200 or so)
- -Average visitation/day since reopening has been 1263 visitors (in contrast to an average peak day which is mid-high 3000s)
- -Reservation system has been a massive benefit to allowing us to reopen MUWO during the pandemic; allows us to manage visitation, and creating safe experience for visitors and staff
- -Use of reservation system and parking contractor during short term closures (Air Quality, PSPS outages, etc.) GoMuirWoods and notification by concessioner (Ace) has been huge benefit- visitors reservation gets automatic notification that their reservation has been cancelled and refunded due to closure.
- -Marin Transit and Park have been in mutual agreement to not operate the shuttle during the pandemic.



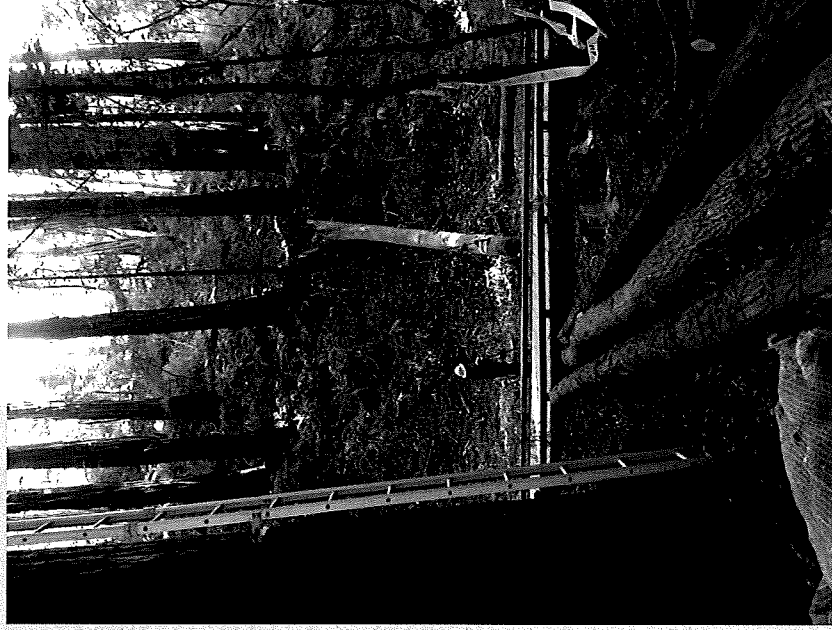
Salmon Habitat Enhancement at Muir Woods

Phase 1 Actions Completed in Fall 2019

Removed 722 LF of Riprap From Banks over
1,500 LF and Buried



Relocated 30 Fallen Trees into Channel; 10 new
LWD jams



Removed 350 LF Asphalt Trail and Off-Hauled

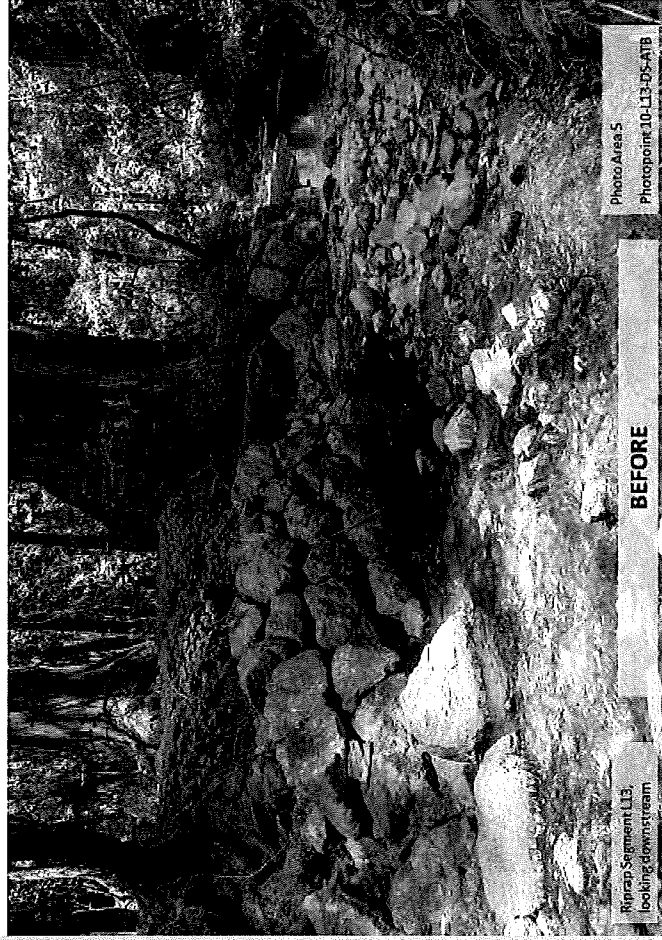


Salmon Habitat Enhancement at Muir Woods Phase 1 Actions Completed Fall 2019



Salmon Habitat Enhancement at Muir Woods Phase 1 Actions Completed Fall 2019

Before



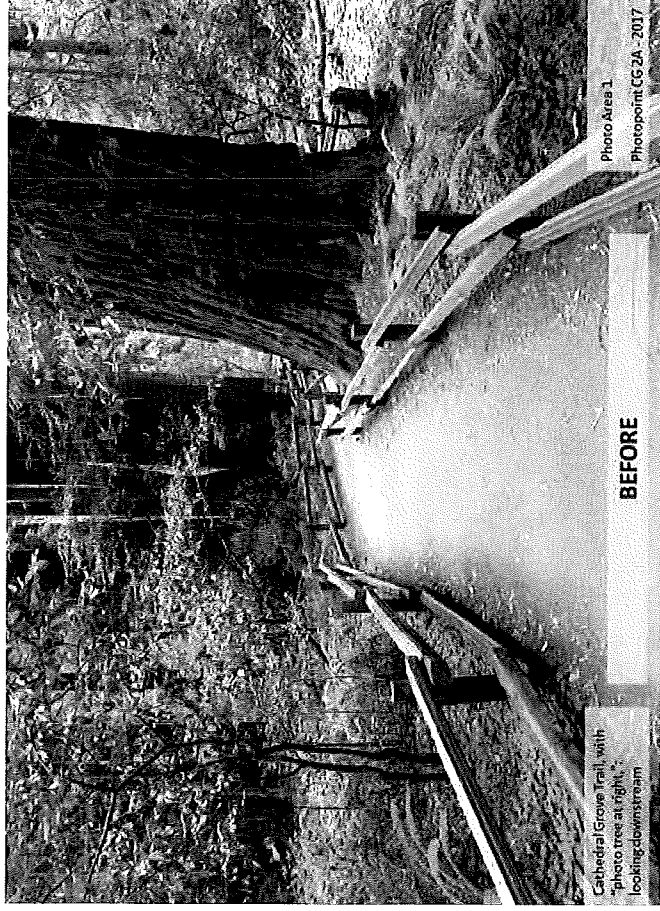
After



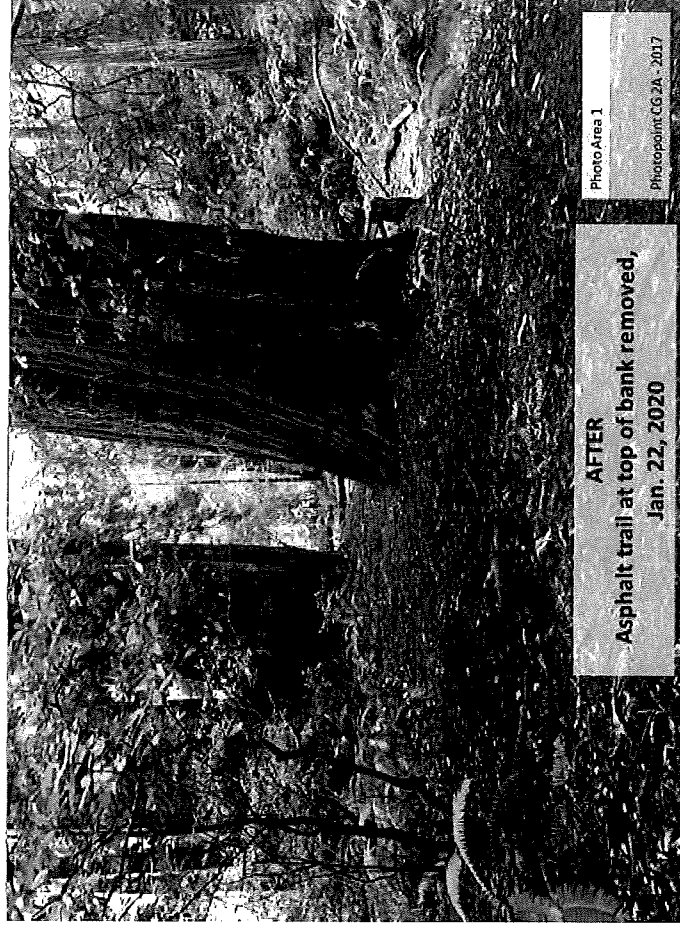
Salmon Habitat Enhancement at Muir Woods

Phase 1 Actions Completed Fall 2019

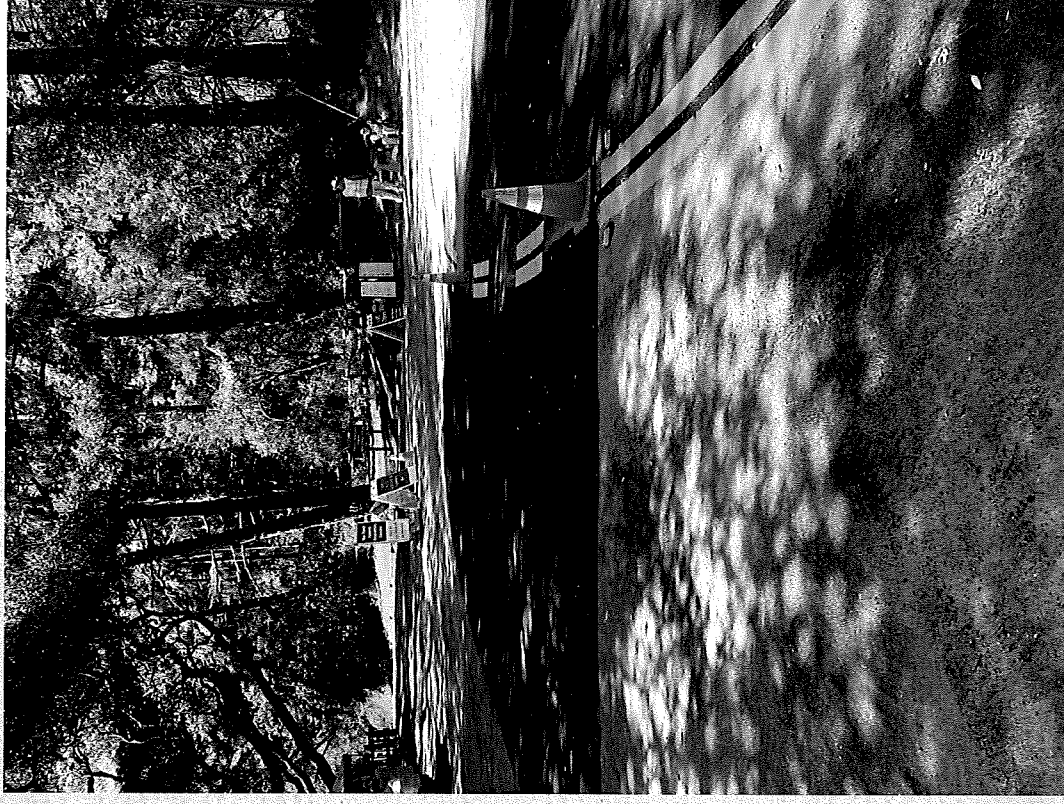
Before, Asphalt Trail at Top of Bank



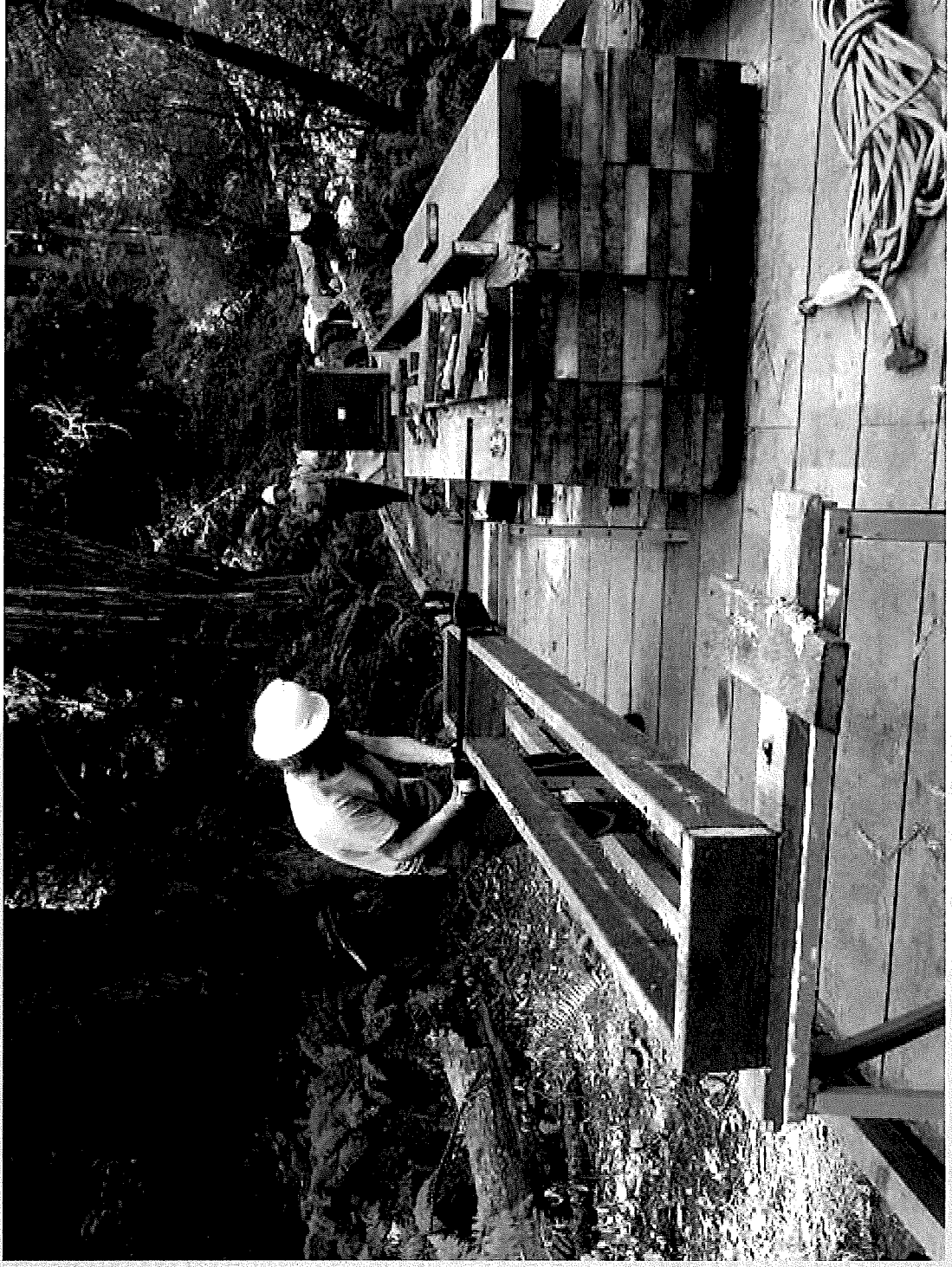
After, 2019, Trail Removed



Water and Sewer Line: What's Under This New Road Surface?



Trail Work Underway



Trail Work Underway



Summary From NPS of Current Pause in Work

