

Trail Trekker Goals and Accomplishments

Dave Weinstein, president, January 2025

Trail Trekkers 2025 goals:

Trail work. Our Public Paths Committee is working closely with city officials to develop a prioritized plan for trail improvement, including to the dozen public pathways that are impassable, and trails within the Hillside Natural Area. The goal is to begin improving and restoring trails this year.

Hikes. Trekkers will hold the 11th Hillside Festival the first weekend in May, in conjunction with the Environmental Quality Committee, and will continue to put on hikes throughout the year.

Preserving Open Space. We will continue to seek the expansion of the Hillside Natural Area through the acquisition of Fairview Open Space and by obtaining easements on some private properties in the Hillside.

Habitat improvement and fire safety. Trekkers will continue to remove vegetative fuels, including French broom, from the Hillside Natural Area, and will work to educate people about fire safety and habitat, and to learn more about the plants and animals of the Hillside. We will work with the city to help implement the Hillside Natural Area Fire Resilience and Forest Conservation plan.

Trail signage. Signs were installed within the Hillside Natural Area last year, but not on the other public trails and stairs throughout the city. Trekkers continues to work to see all of these trails signed.

Community building. In addition to our hikes and festival and work parties, we continue to host get-togethers for members and friends to build a sense of community and spread the word about trails and open space.

Trail Trekkers' 2023 accomplishments:

Trail improvement and development. Trekkers created a Public Paths Committee to prioritize trails to be improved and restored, focusing largely on non-Hillside Natural Area public paths and stairways, but also on Hillside Trails that need work. The goal is to establish a working relationship with the city of El Cerrito. The committee brought in new volunteers with deep experience in trail building, setting the stage for productive work in coming years.

Habitat improvement and fire safety. Trekkers sponsored and co-sponsored many work parties to improve habitat and reduce fire loads, with the Environmental Quality Committee and the newly formed Friends of the Hillside Natural Area.

We worked closely on several French broom pulls with El Cerrito and Albany High Key Club members. We also loaned our weed wrenches to several individual broom pulling volunteers.

Trekkers led or co-led several “bio blitzes” in the Hillside to observe and map the diversity of species that live there. The goal in part was to help the city and its consultants develop the Hillside Natural Area Fire Resilience and Forest Conservation plan. Trekkers also worked closely with officials and consultants as this plan was developed, and we will work on its implementation.

On one such bio blitz, leader Brian Richmond reported, “With the help of experts on insects, fungi, lichen, plants, birds, and more, the group made about 400 observations of 200 or so species, including a number of species that are new to our observation list.”

Brian also created an “El Cerrito Natural Area” project in iNaturalist. The information collected can help identify biodiversity hotspots in the Hillside.

Hikes and programs: Our biggest event of the year, the Hillside Festival in May, attracted about 250 people, fewer than in past years due to rain on the first day, but the events were excellent and most were well attended.

Trekkers was honored to receive a proclamation from the City Council in May “recognizing the 10th anniversary of the El Cerrito Hillside Festival.”

Trekkers put on close to 20 other hikes, ranging from tours of Point Pinole and San Francisco’s central waterfront, to walks through Wildcat Canyon, tours of El Cerrito creeks and of Albany Hill, bird and lichen walks, an art stroll, and hikes on ethno-botany and edible/medicinal plants, and more.

We had a table at the WorldOne July 4 festival, at Solano Stroll, and at GRIP’s Harmony Walk in Richmond.

Trail signage. By late June, after many years of work by Trail Trekkers and later by city officials, directional trail signs designed for Trekkers and the city by the National Park Service were installed at the entrances and at trail intersections throughout the 100-acre wildland park. In August the mayor led a celebration of this accomplishment at one of the trailheads; attending were some of the National Park Service people who had designed both the signs and Trekkers’ El Cerrito trail map.

Map. Trekkers updated and improved our useful and attractive map to all of the city’s trails, both within the Hillside and public paths and stairs elsewhere, publishing our third edition. The map is free to members and available at some local shops.

Building community. Trekkers is one of many organizations in El Cerrito where people come together, share interests, meet each other, and learn. We thank everyone who has come to our events, volunteered, or donated so generously to support open space and trails.

-- Dave Weinstein, Trekker president

