



Gold Country Trails Council

STRATEGIC PLAN

2025

OVERVIEW

In 2022 the GCTC board of directors asked that the 2017 Strategic Plan be updated. From that direction a committee was formed of GCTC members. They met in 2023 to review the current goals and programs established in 2017. The committee conducted a survey of the membership to receive their input before finalizing the goals and programs of the Strategic Plan, which is presented here.

In late 2023 and early 2024 the survey was sent with three main questions allowing for multiple answers. The survey resulted with 82 members (14% of total membership) responding.

Why did you join GCTC?

- Equestrian trail riding (90.7%)
- Advocate and protect trail access for equestrians and other non-motorized users (86.8%)
- Social events, education meetings, newsletter and email notifications (75.6%)

What are your top priorities as it relates to GCTC activities?

- Safety on the trails (87.8%)
- Non-motorized trail advocacy (82.2%)
- Supporting collaboration with other like-minded trail group (80.7%)

Are You Willing to Participate In Trail Work Days?

- Yes (74%)

Based on the survey, the goals and programs were affirmed and supported the same established by the Committee identifying the following five critical areas of interest:

- Support development, protection and maintenance of trails and campgrounds
- Develop cooperative relationships with recreational trail users and land managers and maintain a strong working relationship with the U.S. Forest Service and advocate for non-motorized trail use.
- Nurture the membership, develop meaningful equestrian educational programs and support non-motorized trail usage.
- Publicize GCTC including outreach, public relations and marketing.
- Build a strong internal organization that supports the membership and builds for the future.

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

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission statement is a brief description of GCTC's fundamental purpose and why GCTC exists.

"GCTC is an organization committed to developing, maintaining and advocating for safe integrated trails for equestrians and other non-motorized users."

VISION STATEMENT

The vision statement is GCTC's inspiration and articulates the hopes and dreams of GCTC.

"Public access to trails for equestrian use"

HISTORY

The Gold Country Trails Council was formed in 1981 by a group of Nevada County citizens to fill the need for non-motorized trails in Nevada County and surrounding foothills. The main purpose of this volunteer organization is to provide non-motorized trails and campgrounds for public use. The Council also provides construction and maintenance of group equestrian campgrounds, construction and maintenance of trails and staging areas, and provides maps and trail educational materials.

The citizen volunteers in the Gold Country Trails Council have constructed over 30 miles of trails within the Tahoe National Forest. Most of the public trails are located in the Highway 20 scenic corridor east of Nevada City. The first trail built was named the Pioneer Trail because it follows the route early pioneers took when traveling over the Sierra-Nevada Mountains to Nevada City. The Council has extended the Pioneer Trail from its trailhead five miles east of Nevada City with the Gold Country Equestrian Staging Area on Conservation Road to the Spaulding Lake Trail which connects to the Grouse Ridge Trail and the non-motorized Grouse Ridge Area. The Pioneer Trail was built and extended in cooperation with Caltrans, Tahoe National Forest, Boy Scouts of America, California Youth Authority, and Pacific Gas and Electric Company. It has earned the designation of an official National Recreation Trail.

Two group horse camps have been built and are being maintained by the Council. Little Lasier Meadow Horse Camp near Truckee, and Skillman Horse Camp, which is located on Highway 20 above Nevada City. Both horse camps provide individual truck and trailer parking spaces, hitching posts, corrals, fire rings, picnic tables, restrooms and water for stock.

During the construction and maintenance of horse camps and trails, the Council members have provided thousands of volunteer hours to Nevada County and the Tahoe National Forest.

The Gold Country Trails Council is a tax-exempt, nonprofit organization.

GOALS

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 five years.

1) Support development, protection and maintenance of trails.

- Amend and review project list and calendar each year by December.
- Continue maintenance for trails, trailheads, and campgrounds (Skillman and Little Lasier) in GCTC's area of responsibility based on the Forest Service cost-sharing agreement with GCTC.
- Support trail development and trailheads, in cooperation with land managers (examples include but are not limited to USFS, Bear Yuba Land Trust, Placer Land Trust, Truckee Trail Foundation, Empire Mine State Park) within GCTCs areas of interests for non-motorized trails.
- In cooperation with trail partners, (NCWR, BONC, Back Country Horsemen) continue to raise and allocate financial resources and GCTC organizational support to develop and maintain non-motorized trails, campgrounds and staging areas.
- Maintain trail signage consistent with land manager requirements.
- Direct resources towards Washington Conservation crews, professional trail builders, or non-member volunteer groups when priority projects are beyond the ability of GCTC volunteers.
- Support United Trails Day with trail work and publicity.
- Maintain and use incident data and other available statistical information that supports GCTC's Mission and Vision for discussions with land managers.
- When identifying projects and timeframes where grants would be needed. Identify and designate an individual to write the grant.

2) Develop and maintain cooperative relationships with other recreational trail users and land managers.

- Identify GCTC members willing to reach out to land managers and recreational users. Determine goals, methods, and timeframes for engagement.
- Strengthen and develop strong ties and working relationships with the USFS Tahoe region at the senior levels and work with them to assure long term protection and maintenance of the non-motorized trails and horse camps.
- Strengthen partnerships with Nevada County supervisors, local government agencies and elected representatives, educating them on the Mission and accomplishments of GCTC.
- Maintain liaisons with the Bear Yuba Land Trust, Placer Land Trust, Placer County parks, and the newly created Nevada County Recreation department.
- Maintain and further develop relationships with the Back Country Horsemen, Sierra Club and Audubon society local chapters, BONC and NCWR.

3) Provide meaningful education and outreach to support safe and non-motorized trail usage.

- Continue and expand educational opportunities such as CPR, AED, First Aid GPS, GPX training, clinics on horse emergency care on the trail and horse health topics and horse camping education.
- Conduct outreach through a number of mediums to a broad spectrum of like-minded trail building and equestrian and community groups to support the GCTC mission.
- 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.

- Maintain and develop ongoing fundraising efforts.
- Participate in community events such as parades, BYLT nature days, horse related events, and community outdoor activities throughout the year to emphasize GCTC accomplishments, its mission and to recruit new and younger members.
- Update and develop new promotional materials.
- Continue with GCTC's trail patrol program and encourage members participation.

4) Build a strong internal organization.

- Review the Strategic Plan action items at the GCTC Board meetings in December and June.
- Update the annual budget each year.
- Develop a succession plan for board members and committee chairs encouraging rotation of board positions encouraging mentoring by the board and committee chairs with potential future leaders in the organization.
- Conduct orientation of duties and responsibilities for incoming board members including an updated binder of GCTC information including duties and responsibilities.
- Encourage openness and inclusion of all members.
- Develop and expand interest in committees that provide rewarding and meaningful opportunities for members.
- Encourage mentoring by the Board and committee chairs with potential future leaders in the organization.



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