

To: Status Report to the Parks and Recreation Board
From: Open Space Working Group
Date: December 5, 2025

Task 1: Participate in the public Comprehensive Plan Update process through the Community Development Department to ensure that open space and trails issues are addressed, particularly the zoning changes specified in the Open Space and Trails Management Plan.

OSWG will be invited to participate in the process.

Task 2: Provide public information about open space issues through forums, tours, newspaper articles, and other methods to broaden public understanding of the management of open space and trails.

- OSWG explored the potential for having a county trail designated as a National Recreation Trail to boost the visibility of the County Trail Network. This exploration is in the very early stages of development.
- The Adopt-a-Trail plan (see task 4) also serves this purpose.

Task 3: Coordinate with the Equestrian and Livestock Working group in planning for a new equestrian trail from the stables to Bayo Canyon for use in the winter when other equestrian access trails are iced over.

Members of the two working groups met at the Posse Shack and walked the potential routes. See Attachment 1 for the Summary Report

Task 4: Continue to develop Adopt-a-Trail plan and monitor conditions on County Open Space.

- In a review of members' experiences with the Los Alamos Now app as a reporting tool for the Adopt-a-Trail program, the consensus was that as it is currently configured, the app is quirky and somewhat difficult to use. Other limitations reported were the lack of a map, no way to accurately report the location of an issue, the app's requirement to enter data in a specific sequence, too few choices on the dropdown menu, and the inability of users to see already submitted issues.
- Group members were tasked with submitting ideas for improving the app, particularly adding additional issues to the dropdown menu.
- A paper version of the program may be implemented while the app is being developed. Four popular trails will be used as a pilot program.

Respectfully submitted,

Craig Martin
Member, Open Space Working Group

Attachment 1. Report to Parks and Recreation Board Safe Equestrian Access to Bayo Canyon for Winter Use

**Submitted by Open Space and Equestrian and Livestock Working Groups
December 11, 2025**

Background: At the request of the Parks and Recreation Board, the Open Space Working Group (OSWG) and the Equestrian and Livestock Working Group (ELWG) collaborated to investigate the potential for a new multi-use access trail from the Los Alamos Stable Area into Bayo Canyon. This topic aligns with Appendix A, Policies for Additions, Realignments, and Deletions to Trail Network, in the 2025 Open Space and Trails Management Plan.

Problem: The two existing trails that connect the stables area to the County trail network in Bayo and Rendija canyons are both on north-facing slopes subject to icy conditions in winter. This poses a serious safety concern for equestrians when these trails become treacherous due to ice. ELWG suggested that the County consider construction of a new trail on North Mesa that would provide an ice-free connection between the stables and the canyon trail network.

Findings: OSWG and ELWG members surveyed North Mesa together to scout possible routes for a trail that would receive direct sunlight on winter days. Each segment of the proposed new trail is described below: (See attached maps.)

1. Access from stables to new trail: East of the Posse Lodge, North Mesa Road makes a very sharp turn before it reaches the entrance road to the stable area. Sight limitations created by the curve greatly limit the options for a safe access point, so we recommend that it be placed at the far northwest corner of the stable area, adjacent to the Posse Shack.
2. From trail access point to Terry Lane at Hawk's Landing: The working team recommends that the new trail cross the road to the current RV storage area to minimize conflicts with Posse Shack users. Mindful of possible upcoming reworking of the North Mesa ballfields and the RV storage area, we recommend that the trail be routed in between the line of tall ponderosa pines along the road and new fencing along the proposed parking area.
3. From Terry Lane at Hawk's Landing to North Mesa Picnic Area entrance: Three options were identified:

Option 3A. Continuing on the south side of North Mesa Road on school property, to a crossing near the water tank west of the North Mesa Picnic Area. This option would require an agreement with Los Alamos Public Schools. Some trees might need to be removed to reduce the potential for icy trail conditions by opening the trail to sunlight. The terrain is flat along this route.

Option 3B. Crossing to the north side of North Mesa Road at Terry Lane. To accommodate the new trail, this option would require a long culvert to be installed and covered in the roadside drainage ditch for about 400 feet, ending at the edge of the open area at the picnic grounds.

Option 3C. Continuing along the south side of North Mesa Road and crossing near the boundary between Hawk's Landing and the North Mesa Picnic Area. Advantages of this option are that the terrain on the south side is flat and open, the proposed crossing is on a straight section of the road, and the open area is free of obstructions. The trail could then parallel the road and sidewalk and not interfere with existing uses of the picnic area.

4. From North Mesa Picnic Grounds to the curve in North Mesa Road east of the roundabout: This segment would follow an existing trail through County Open Space. Two culverts and general widening of the trail would be needed to accommodate equestrians.

5. From the curve in North Mesa Road, just east of the roundabout, to the San Ildefonso Road underpass: Up to this point, the trail has passed through relatively level terrain. However, the last several hundred feet are on a steep hill that requires careful design.

Option 5A routes the trail parallel to the road and sidewalk. There is room for a trail north of the sidewalk for the first 300 feet, and then the terrain narrows for about 200 feet. This narrow section would require either a retaining wall, with the trail on top, or a resurfacing of the concrete sidewalk with a material suitable for horses.

Option 5B accesses the Bayo Canyon Trail using a series of switchbacks that start at the road curve. This would be a challenging section of trail to build and would not necessarily remain ice-free all winter.

Recommendations: OSWG recommends construction of a multi-use, hard-packed dirt trail that connects the stable area to the County trail network in Bayo and Rendija canyons. This trail could be built in-house or with on-call contractors, with some engineering assistance needed for the final segment near the roundabout.

The two preferred options are either (1) to keep the trail on the south side of North Mesa Road to the vicinity of the North Mesa water tower near the entrance to North Mesa Picnic

Grounds (see Option 3A), or (2) for the trail to follow on the south side of the road to a crossing to the north side of the road at the eastern boundary of North Mesa Picnic Grounds, then parallel to the sidewalk and continuing to the San Ildefonso underpass (Option 3C). For the steep hill section near the roundabout, Option 5A is preferred.

We also recommend parking improvements to accommodate equestrian trailers or other large vehicles such as RVs at North Mesa Picnic Grounds.

Further Considerations Regarding the Bayo Canyon Trailhead:

1. Equestrian concerns centered on the availability of horse trailer parking at the trailhead. Parking at the current trailhead is always haphazard, but even improved parking at that location would likely still pose difficult access for trailers and trailer turnarounds, as well as for out-of-town visitors driving RVs.

Consequently, while considering how the proposed trail might fit in with the future Bayo Canyon Trailhead improvements and the North Mesa Recreation Area Master Plan, the group discussed the idea of relocating the main Bayo Canyon Trailhead from its current location near the roundabout to North Mesa Picnic Grounds. The group also saw advantages to maintaining both trailhead access locations, with additional improvements at each.

The level terrain, existing restrooms, and existing parking would make development of a new trailhead at the Picnic Grounds a much lower-cost option. The proposed multi-use trail would serve all users as access not only to the Bayo Canyon Trail but also to other trails on the County Network. ADA features and some improved parking would be required. This could be tied to the new alignment of facilities at the North Mesa Recreation Area.

2. In addition to this proposed new multi-use trail, there are currently three other planning efforts for recreation projects on North Mesa:

- North Mesa Recreation Area Master Plan
- Bayo Canyon Trailhead improvements
- proposals in the Artificial Turf study

Pulling components of these into a cohesive single plan has the potential to provide additional recreational benefits, reduce user conflicts, and lead to considerable cost savings.

3. Because many types of improvements are not permitted uses in the zoning district OS-PO, the Bayo Canyon Trailhead improvements might require a zoning change. Before County staff apply to the Planning and Zoning Commission to request such a change,

OSWG/ELWG recommends that the PRB ask staff for a presentation on the current plans for the Bayo Canyon Trailhead.

Summary: We all agree that improvements at the Bayo Trailhead are sorely needed, but ask that meaningful public input be sought on the nature and extent of the improvements early in the planning process, as has been done for the North Mesa Recreation Area Master Plan.

Option 3.1, 5A



Bayo Canyon Trail

5A

5B

Disc Golf Course

North Mesa
Picnic Area

Hawks
Landing

church

Sheriffs
Posse

RV Lot

San Ildefonso Rd

Barranca Rd

Los Alamos
Middle
School

Option 3.3, 5A



Bayo Canyon Trail

5A

5B

Disc Golf Course

North Mesa
Picnic Area

Los Alamos
Middle School

Hawks
Landing

Church

Sheriffs Posse

RV
Parking

San Ildefonso Rd

Barranca Rd