

Trails and Agriculture: Bridging Productive and Recreational Landscapes

May 20, 2015



Origins of Ventura County Study

- Find ways that existing trails have maximized compatibility with agricultural operations
- Identify methods to guide trail planning that protect the interests of both farmers and trail users



Project Location



Project Location



Process

- National inventory of existing trails in agricultural settings
- Review of relevant literature and programs
- Interviews with farm and trail operators



Trail Selection Criteria

- Pass through or adjacent to active agricultural areas
- Near high-value crops and orchards
- Paved surface and/or high levels of use
- Existing or historical rail use
- Priority given to projects in California
- Detailed information available from trail and agricultural operators

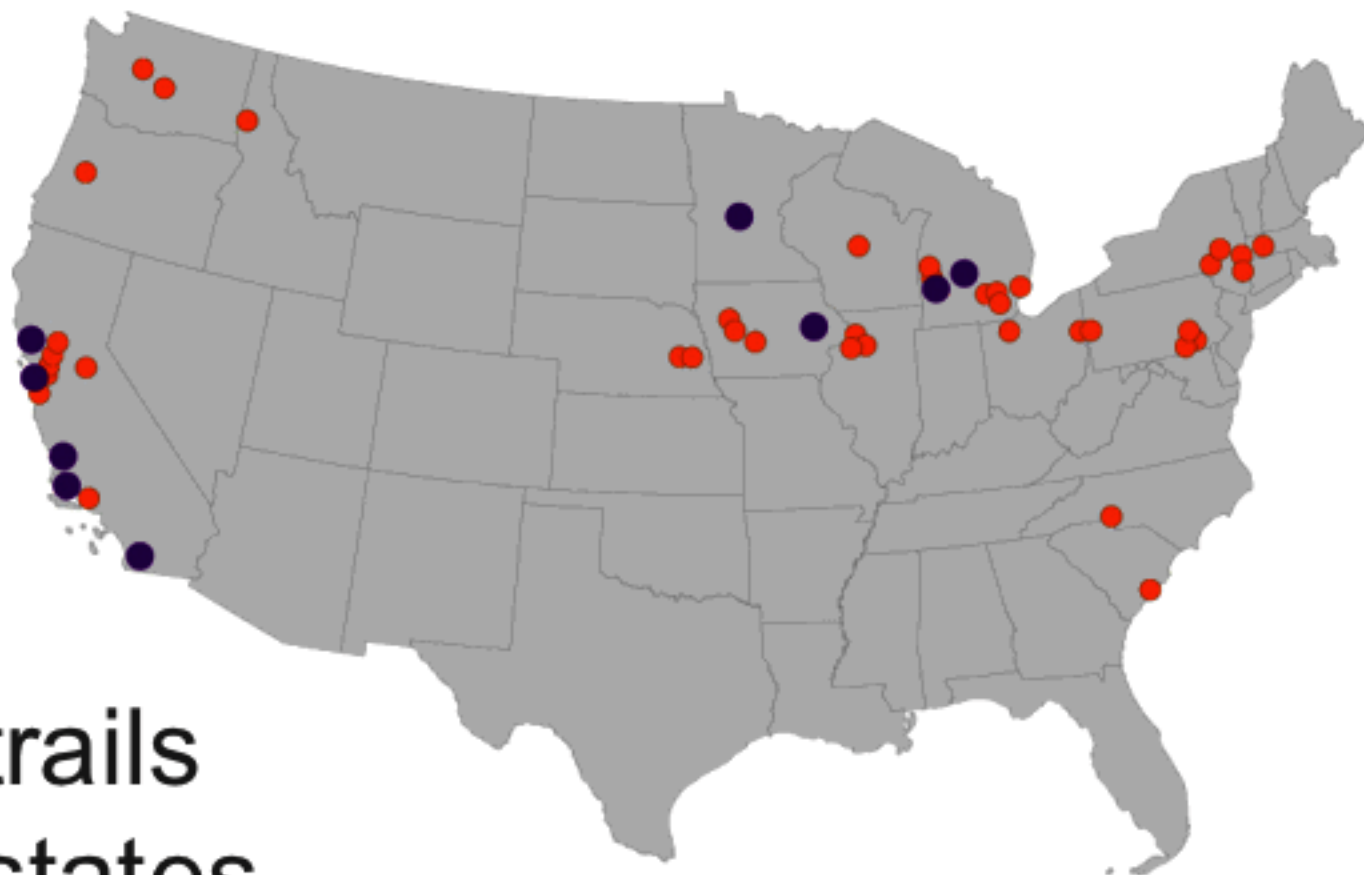


National Trail Inventory



37 trails
16 states

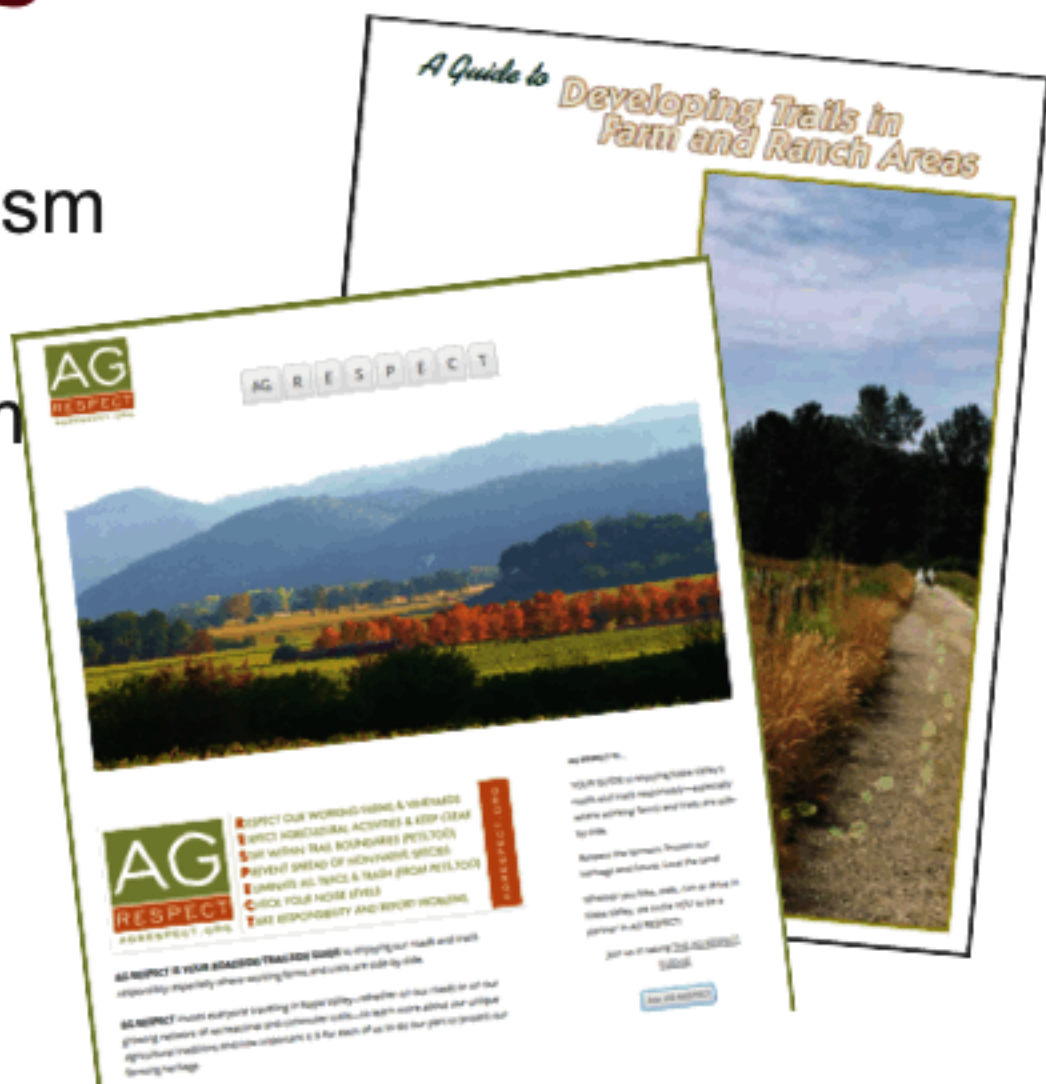
Trails Selected for In-Depth Study



9 trails
4 states

Literature/Program Review

- Most literature related to agritourism
- Napa Valley's AG RESPECT program
- British Columbia's *Trails through Agriculture Areas*



Expressed Concerns

- Theft and vandalism
- Crop contamination and weeds
- Public safety
- Disruption of operations
- Shading crops
- Encroachments onto trail



Strategies for Success

- Design Strategies
- Management Strategies
- Indemnification



Design Strategies – Fencing

Chain link

- Only recommended where trespassing or theft is a serious concern
- Less visually compatible with agricultural and recreational landscapes

Bob Jones Bike Trail,
San Luis Obispo, CA



Design Strategies – Fencing



Obern Trail
Santa Barbara County, CA

Design Strategies – Fencing

Wire Strand Fencing

- Visual indication of property line
- Least visually intrusive

Cowell-Purisima Trail,
San Mateo County, CA
Photo: Paolo Vescia



Design Strategies – Buffers

Hedges

- Provide visual separation between farms and trail
- May substitute for fencing



Obern Trail
Santa Barbara County, CA

Design Strategies – Hedges

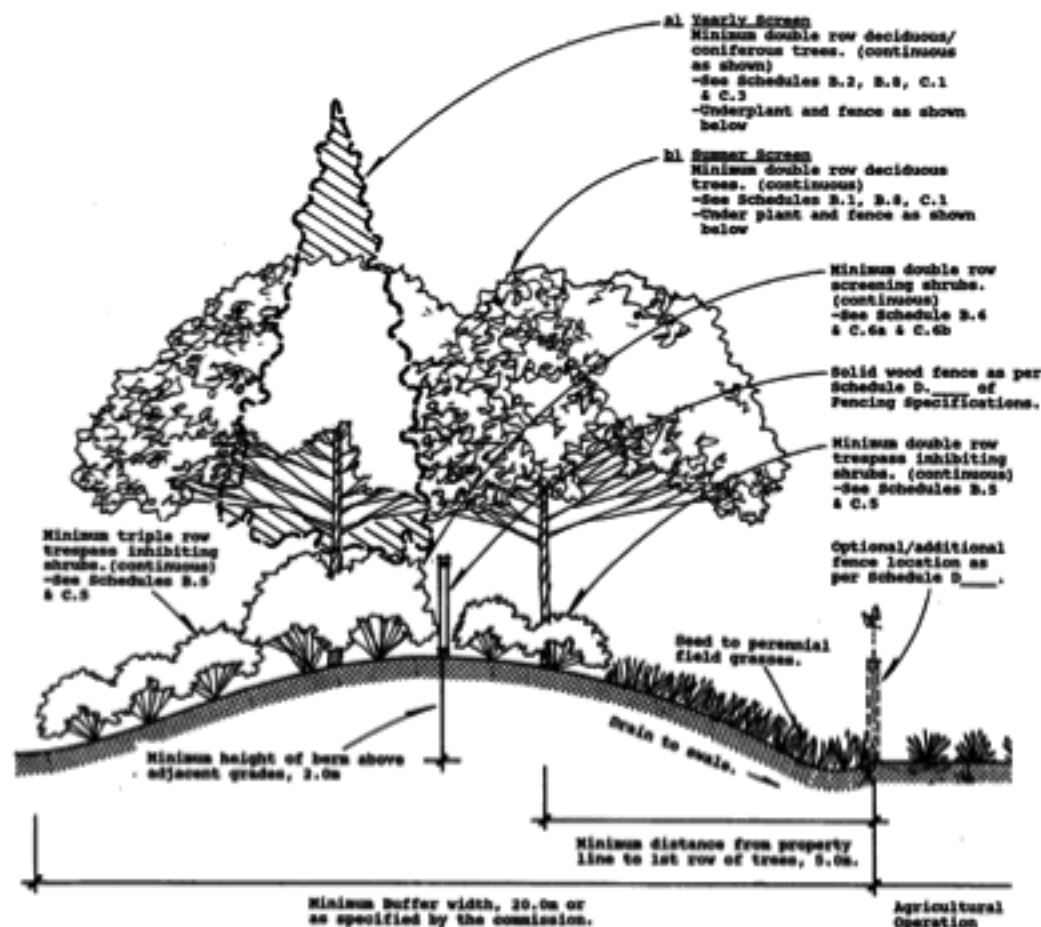


Fred Meijer Heartland Trail
Montcalm County, MI

Design Strategies – Buffers

Physical Separation

- Depending on design, can screen sight, dust, and sound
- Separation can help further discourage trespassing and vandalism



Design Strategies – Crossings

Trail Crossings

- Design trail to minimize crossings
- Discuss trail crossings with each farmer to ensure adequate crossings are provided

Requests from farmers are handled on an individual basis, and are almost always related to crossings.
- Steve Hahn, Washington State Parks



Cowell-Purisima Trail,
San Mateo County, CA

Design Strategies – Crossings

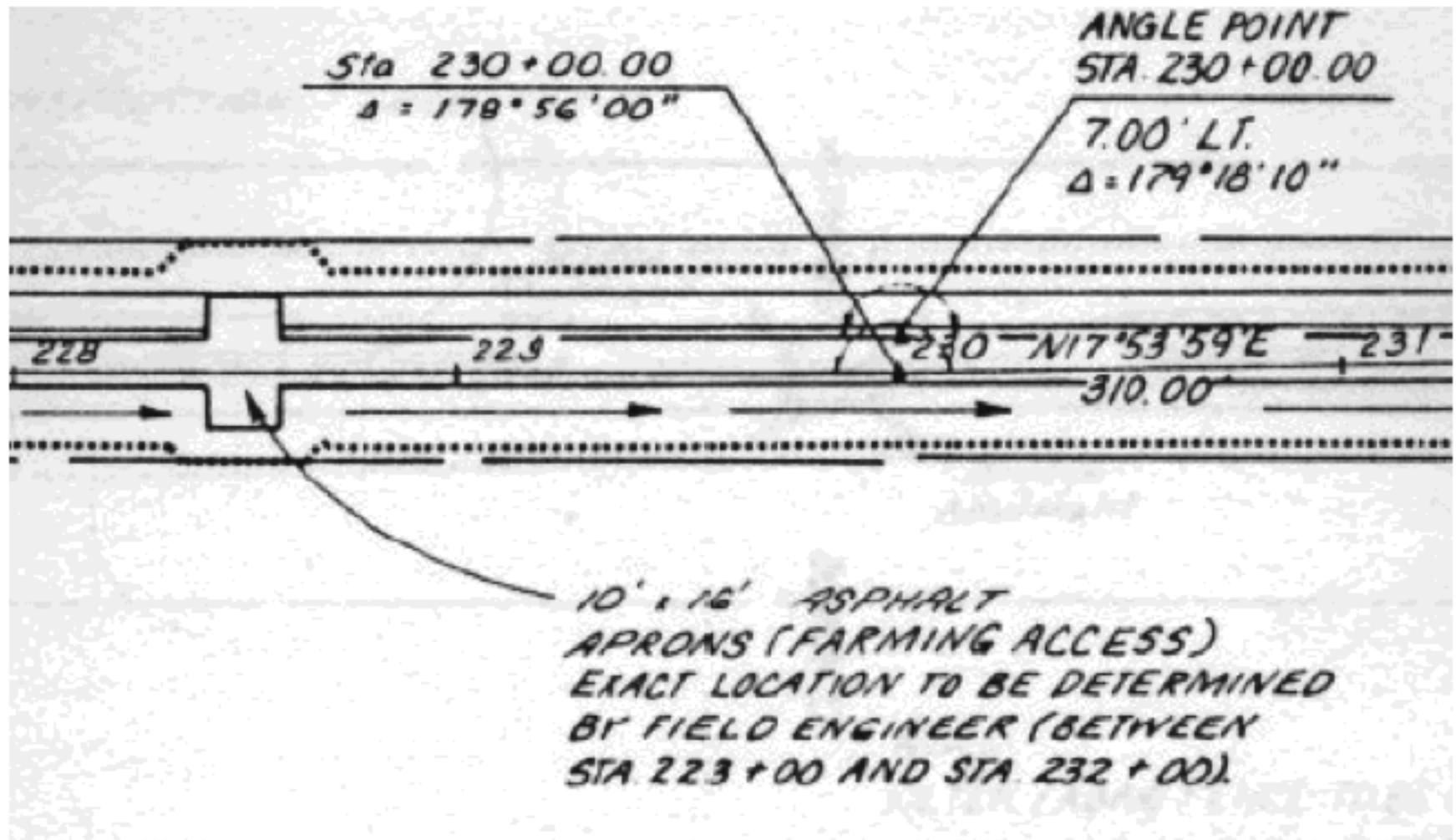
Trail Crossings

- Where needed, add gaps in fencing and/or gates to accommodate farm equipment



Cowell-Purisima Trail,
San Mateo County, CA

Safe Farm Equipment Crossings



Design Strategies – Crossings

- Reinforce base material at crossings to support farm equipment.
- Set back signs adjacent to crossings to allow for large turning radii.

Heritage Trail, PA



Design Strategies – Gates

- At trail entrances allow trail closure for specific farm operations
- At crossings, prevent trail users from entering farm; help distinguish farm road from a trail

Cowell-Purisima Trail,
San Mateo County, CA



Design Strategies – Signage

Signage Types

- **Regulatory**
 - Stay on the trail/no trespassing
- **Etiquette**
 - Watch for and yield to farm equipment
- **Warning**
 - Spraying schedules
- **Informational**
 - Notice of trail closures
- **Wayfinding**



Design Strategies – Signage



San Dieguito Rier Trail
San Diego, CA



Design Strategies – Signage



Joe Rodota Regional Trail
Sonoma County, CA



Design Strategies – Signage



Design Strategies – Lighting

- Improves safety
- Allows use by early morning and evening commuters

A bike path makes theft harder, not easier. Once we installed lights, it gets so much use there are always eyes on the trail.
- Matt Dobberteen, Santa Barbara County Public Works



Obern Trail
Santa Barbara County, CA

Design Strategies – Lighting



Obern Trail
Santa Barbara County, CA

Management Strategies

- Spray during specific hours
- Gate closures to be requested by farmers, allowing for spraying and equipment crossings



Management Strategies

- Regular and responsive trail maintenance
- Patrol by local authorities
- Address farmers' concerns as they arise

If I could do it all over again, I would have pushed for more stringent trash cleanup requirements from the trail operator.

- Matt Witman, Citrus Farmer, San Diego, CA



Indemnification

All 50 states have Recreational Use Statutes

Existing law protects public entities and easement grantors from legal claims

- California Government Code § 831.4
- California Civil Code § 846

Private landowners protected as long as:

- No invitation
- No fee charged
- No willful or malicious intent

Specific indemnification and insurance

- San Diego County Ordinance Number 9233
- San Diego County JPA insurance

Indemnification was a dealbreaker – farmers and the farm bureau would have never supported the trail without it.

- Matt Witman, Citrus Farmer, San Diego, CA

How Effective?

- Many projects initiated with significant community concerns
- After construction, problems few and far between
- Similar responses from both trail managers and farmers

If someone wanted to steal from a farm, they'd find a place where no one could see them, not a trail with steady use.
- Matt Dobberteen, County of Santa Barbara

My husband and I were initially opposed to the trail, with concern about trespassing, but this has not been an issue. And now our family uses the trail.
- Joyce Squires, K&J Squires Farms, Linn County, IA

Responses from Trail Managers



...no complaints since the trail went in. Many farmers have since become supporters of the trail.

- Shawna Anderson, San Dieguito River Park

No problems reported with agricultural spraying, trespassing or littering from the public.

- Peter Theismann, Park Director, Stearns County Parks, MN

Responses from Farmers

I've had no problems with the trail. I walk my dog along the trail to check on my crops.

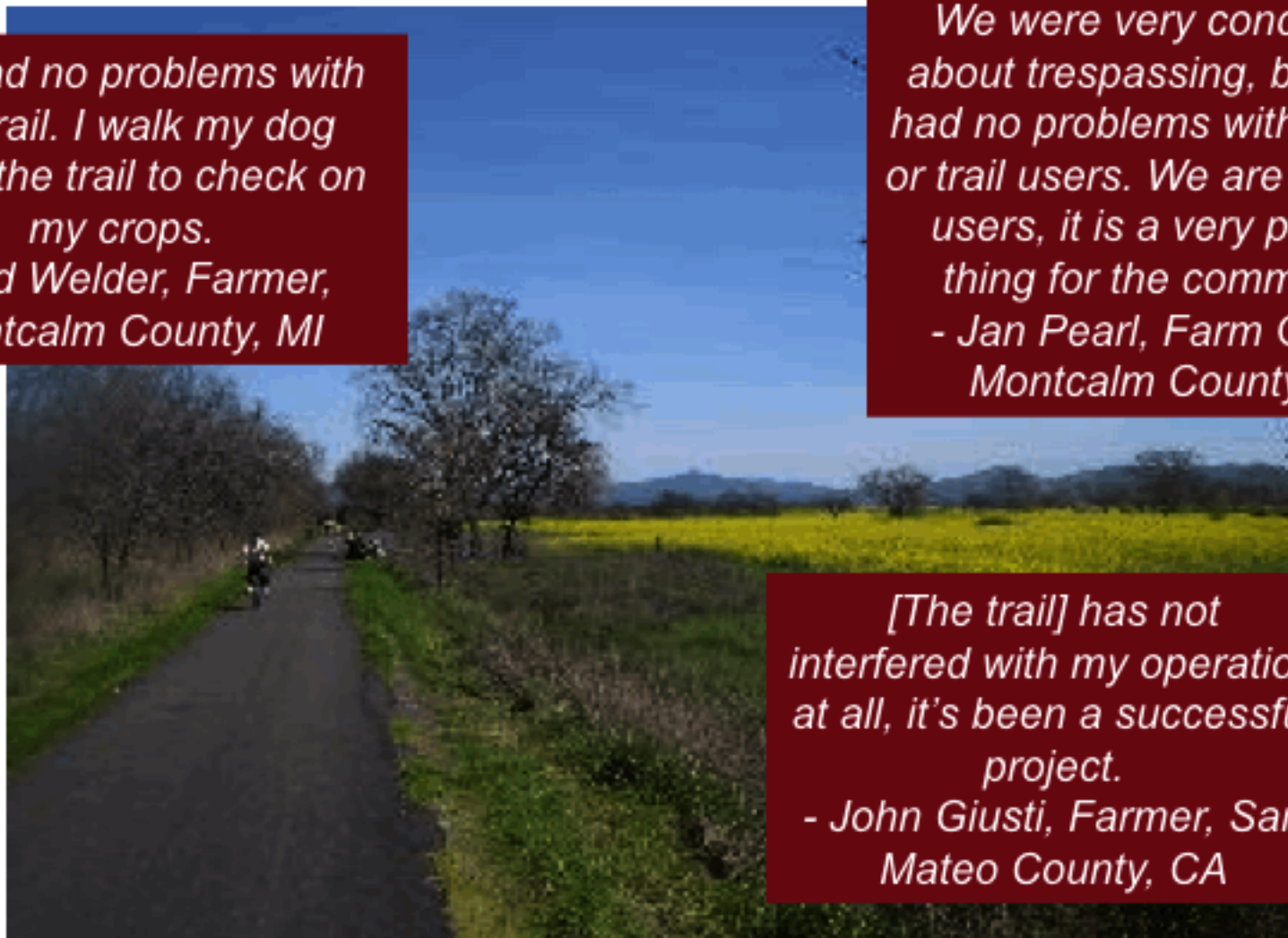
*- Ned Welder, Farmer,
Montcalm County, MI*

We were very concerned about trespassing, but have had no problems with the trail or trail users. We are now trail users, it is a very positive thing for the community.

*- Jan Pearl, Farm Owner,
Montcalm County, MI*

[The trail] has not interfered with my operation at all, it's been a successful project.

*- John Giusti, Farmer, San
Mateo County, CA*



Infrequent Incidents

We've had 4 incidents in 20 years where the trail has been sprayed by a farmer.

- Don Stearns, Friends of the Fred Meijer Trail, Montcalm County, MI

I've experienced no problems with the trail, other than a deer hunter using it on occasion.

- Robert Spencer, Farm Operator Montcalm County, MI

Occasionally homeless pass through and there is minor vandalism, but not serious enough to involve the authorities.

- John Givens, Farm Operator, Santa Barbara County, CA

Notable Incidents



Trespassing hasn't been a major problem but one time a bicycle race took place on the trail, and one of the racers got lost and strayed onto the farm and a pack of racers followed.
- Matt Witman, Citrus Farmer, San Diego, CA

Building Consensus

- Address individual farmers' concerns
- Keep lines of communication clear and responsive
- If a safe condition or consensus cannot be achieved, reroute the trail as necessary

The ability to work as a team is key to success.
- Paul Ringgold, Peninsula Open Space Trust

Conflicts with farmers during the planning phase were resolved early on. No conflicts or issues have been reported since.

- Wes Lomax, Michigan Department of Natural Resources



Building Consensus

- Maintain the trail and educate trail users
- Promote trail etiquette
- Consider a wide range of design and management solutions for specific needs.



Individual agreements were arranged with farmers and communities, formed over decades.
- Kevin Thusius, Director of Conservation, Ice Age Trail, WI

Education and Outreach

- Proactive approach
- Promote etiquette by trail users
- Communicating to broader community about value and needs of agriculture
- Mutually beneficial outcomes

Napa Valley Vine Trail

- 47 miles from Vallejo to Calistoga
- 20% built



Napa Valley Vine Trail Coalition

- Over 30 organizations on Board
- Land and Agricultural interests
 - Napa Valley Vintners
 - Napa Valley Grapegrowers
 - Napa County Farm Bureau
 - Winegrowers of Napa County
 - Land Trust of Napa County
- 8 public agencies
- 7 Economic interest groups
- 3 environmental groups
- 5 cultural and community interest groups

Why People Visit Napa Valley

- Wine
- Food
- Outdoors



"IT WAS THE
PERFECT MIX
OF EDUCATION,
FUN & EXERCISE!"

JENNIFER, LAS VEGAS, NV



GET READY
TO
EXPERIENCE
THE VINEYARDS
WITH ALL 5 SENSES



- R**ESPECT OUR WORKING FARMS & VINEYARDS
- E**XPECT AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES & KEEP CLEAR
- S**TAY WITHIN TRAIL BOUNDARIES (PETS, TOO)
- P**REVENT SPREAD OF NON-NATIVE SPECIES
- E**LIMINATE ALL TRACE & TRASH (FROM PETS, TOO)
- C**CHECK YOUR NOISE LEVELS
- T**AKE RESPONSIBILITY AND REPORT PROBLEMS

AGRESPECT.ORG

AG RESPECT

NAPA VALLEY'S AGRICULTURAL PRESERVE

- A land-zoning ordinance that has established agriculture and open space as the “best use” for the land.
- Trails stay in existing transportation corridors, approved exceptions in the Ag Preserve.



AG RESPECT

RESPECT OUR WORKING FARMS AND VINEYARDS

- Farms and vineyards are private property and trespassing is prohibited.
- Please respect working farms and vineyards and do no harm.



AG RESPECT

EXPECT AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES & KEEP CLEAR

- Please keep clear and be alert of vineyard activities:
 - Tractors, trailers and heavy machinery
 - Mowing and tilling in and around vineyards
 - Frost protection sprinklers and wind machines
 - Spraying, irrigation and pest control applications
 - Debris collection, chopping, chipping and possible burning
 - Pruning, harvest and general vine tending
 - Erosion control efforts



AG RESPECT

STAY WITHIN TRAIL BOUNDARIES (PETS, TOO)

- Respect landowners and businesses
- Never trespass on private property
- Keep pets on leash and within trail boundaries
- Keep safe speed and distance
- Do not pick anything



AG RESPECT

PREVENT SPREAD OF NON-NATIVE SPECIES

- Do not pick or transport plant materials from outside or within trail areas.
- Stay on trails, keep pets on leash to avoid spread of disease and non-native species.
- Clean and inspect clothing and gear before entering agricultural areas.
- Pack out all trash, including “natural” and or organic materials including apple cores, orange seeds.



AG RESPECT

ELIMINATE ALL TRACE & TRASH (FROM PETS, TOO)

- Plan ahead and prepare.
- Pack out or dispose of waste, trash and recycling including pet droppings and natural or organic food items.
- Stay on designated trails.
- Be considerate of others and do your part to keep agriculture lands beautiful.



AG RESPECT

CHECK YOUR NOISE LEVEL

- Use appropriate volume when communicating.
- Use horns and bells for safety only.
- No broadcasting, music or speakers.



AG RESPECT

TAKE RESPONSIBILITY AND REPORT PROBLEMS

- Support the long-term sustainability of our trails by doing your part to keep them safe, clean and enjoyable.
- Alert the appropriate jurisdiction to unsafe or degraded trail conditions.



Businesses and trails



Businesses and trails



Trails and the Farm Economy



"When the trail developed, this farm only had cows next to the trail. They sold ice cream and put up a small hut on their farm next to the trail. It has grown ever since and is a destination for trail users and the public in the area." - Paul Yauk, MI DNR

"MI tries to work with the Agricultural community on partnership like this with farm markets and other ventures that assist locally grown goods." - Paul Yauk, MI DNR

Trails and the Farm Economy

Lake Hills Greenbelt,
Bellevue, WA



Next Steps

- Design and Management
 - Additional Research
 - How do issues vary based on types of crops and farmers' specific operational needs?
 - Larger sample size
 - Guidelines/Best Practices
 - Buffer materials, dimensions
 - Fencing
 - Gates/access
 - Trail crossings and closures
 - Signage

QUESTIONS?



Questions?

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