

El Cerrito Trail Trekker Goals and Accomplishments

Brian Richmond & Wade Huntley, Co-Presidents, January 2026

Trail Trekkers 2026 goals:

Hikes and Events. Trekkers will hold the 12th annual Hillside Festival the first weekend in May together with the Environmental Quality Committee, the 2nd annual Public Paths Festival in the fall, and a dozen or more hikes and events throughout the year. We aim to have at least one event each month, and keep up the variety.

Public Paths. Our Public Paths Committee is working closely with city officials to develop a long-term process for city-nonprofit group volunteer work. Our goal is to begin building public paths this year, starting with a path at Tassajara Park. We may need vocal community support to see this goal accomplished this year. Stay tuned!

Trail work. Some of the trails in natural areas, especially the Hillside Natural Area (HNA), need improvement or major maintenance. We plan to organize trailwork events in the spring and early summer to make our trails safer and more durable.

Habitat improvement and fire safety. Trekkers will continue to support city efforts to apply for grants to implement the Hillside Natural Area Fire Resilience and Forest Conservation plan (HNA Plan), adopted in 2025. We will partner with the city in their efforts to accomplish the goals of the awarded Coastal Conservancy grant (about \$500k) to remove Eucalyptus trees from a high fire-risk area, host a wood milling demonstration project, and begin activities to restore the area with native habitat.

Public Path signage. We succeeded, in partnership with the city, to install trail signs in the Hillside Natural Area in 2024, but not on the other public trails and stairs throughout the city. Trekkers continue to work towards having all these paths signed.

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.

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' 2025 accomplishments:

Public Paths Festival. We organized the first festival devoted to non-Hillside paths in El Cerrito, with the goal of raising awareness and educating our community about their existence, history and, in many places, dire need for improvements. About 125 people attended the five hikes over two days (Nov 1-2) that covered just about every path in El Cerrito.

Trail improvement and development. The Public Paths Committee met regularly with the city's Public Works department and presented them with a detailed plan for replacing an eroding trail with a robust path including stair treads and railing at Tassajara Park. They helped draft updated volunteer waiver forms and a volunteer

training process for the city to edit and review. The goal is to establish a working relationship and process with the city of El Cerrito to make it easier in the future.

HNA Plan. Trekkers played a key role as a stakeholder group in the development of the Hillside Natural Area Fire Resilience and Forest Conservation plan, and advocating with staff and city councilmembers to adopt it, which it did on June 3, 2025.

Habitat improvement and fire safety. Trekkers sponsored and co-sponsored work parties to improve habitat and reduce fire loads with the Environmental Quality Committee and Friends of the Hillside Natural Area, including an Earth Day volunteer event. We worked on French broom removal in partnership with the Friends of the Hillside Natural Area, and loaned weed wrenches to individual broom pulling volunteers.

Trekkers led the 2nd annual “BioBlitz” in the Hillside to observe and map the diversity of species that live there, documented in an “El Cerrito Natural Area” project in iNaturalist. Leaders Brian Richmond and Alan Siegel reported, “With the help of experts on insects, fungi, plants, and more, the group made 361 observations of 154 species within a few hours.”

Hikes and programs: Our biggest event of the year, the Hillside Festival in May, attracted about 350-400 people, one of our largest yet. Hikes and other events (13) were excellent and most were well attended. Our second largest event was the Public Paths Festival, noted earlier.

About 350 people joined 14 other hikes, ranging from tours of Point San Pablo, Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline, San Francisco’s Piers, and Sausalito Stairways; to hikes celebrating the newly-expanded Old St. Hilary’s Preserve in Tiburon; walks through Wildcat Canyon; tours of El Cerrito history and of Kensington’s Public Paths; an art stroll; and hikes on biomes, edible/medicinal plants, and more.

We had a table at the WorldOne July 4 festival and at the Solano Stroll, and spoke with hundreds of people.

Preserving Open Space. We organized an event celebrating the 10-year anniversary of the acquisition of the Madera Open Space as part of the HNA. Attendees included some of the early leaders of the effort, representatives from the Trust for Public Lands, and newer members of the community.

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.

