

Save Our Foothills

Who are we? Why did we form? What are our goals?

Dan Schelling

slcfoothills.org



***Save Our Foothills* acknowledges that we live on and enjoy
the traditional and ancestral homelands of the
Ute, Shoshone, Paiute and Goshute Tribes.**



Who are we?

Save Our Foothills is a conservation campaign dedicated to the preservation of the Foothills natural areas adjacent to Salt Lake City. We are committed to protecting the environmental integrity of these fragile public lands for future generations, and encourage responsible enjoyment of the SLC Foothills.



Why did we form?

Save Our Foothills formed in response to problems encountered with the implementation of the Salt Lake City "*Foothills Trail System Plan*" in 2020 and 2021, including:

- (1) 15 miles of poorly built and unsustainable trails that caused land and habitat destruction, hillside collapse, and the unnecessary scarring of hillsides; and
- (2) The closure and/or destruction of existing trails that had been used for decades by Salt Lake City residents.



Trail constructed by Salt Lake City in 2021 through a pristine meadow below Twin Peaks



Problems with Phase 1 of the Trails Plan

1) Construction of unsafe, unsustainable and unsightly trails

Boulders along trail



Deep cut prone to erosion and slumping

Dumped material at angle of repose

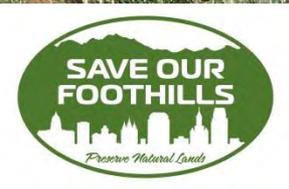
Trail does not include rain-lines for runoff

*Unsustainable trail gouged out of the hillside above the 18th Avenue Meadows.
Note: This trail was not built in the planned location.*



2) Fragmentation and destruction of plant and wildlife habitats

These meadows and groves used to be home to coyote, fox, deer, owls and other wildlife. The area is now cut by multiple trails, including a dedicated downhill mtn bike trail.



3) Trail duplication and multiplication

Duplicate trail constructed below an existing ridgeline trail
(This trail cost an estimated \$42,000/mile;
future trails will cost \$150,000/mile)

Original historic
and sustainable
trail along ridgeline

New redundant trail cut within
50 to 100 ft of historic ridgeline
trail



4) Destruction and closure of historic, sustainable trails

Redundant new trail



Trench gouged out of popular, **historic ridgeline trail** - in the name of “revegetation” and “sustainability”



Fence placed to prevent use of historic trail

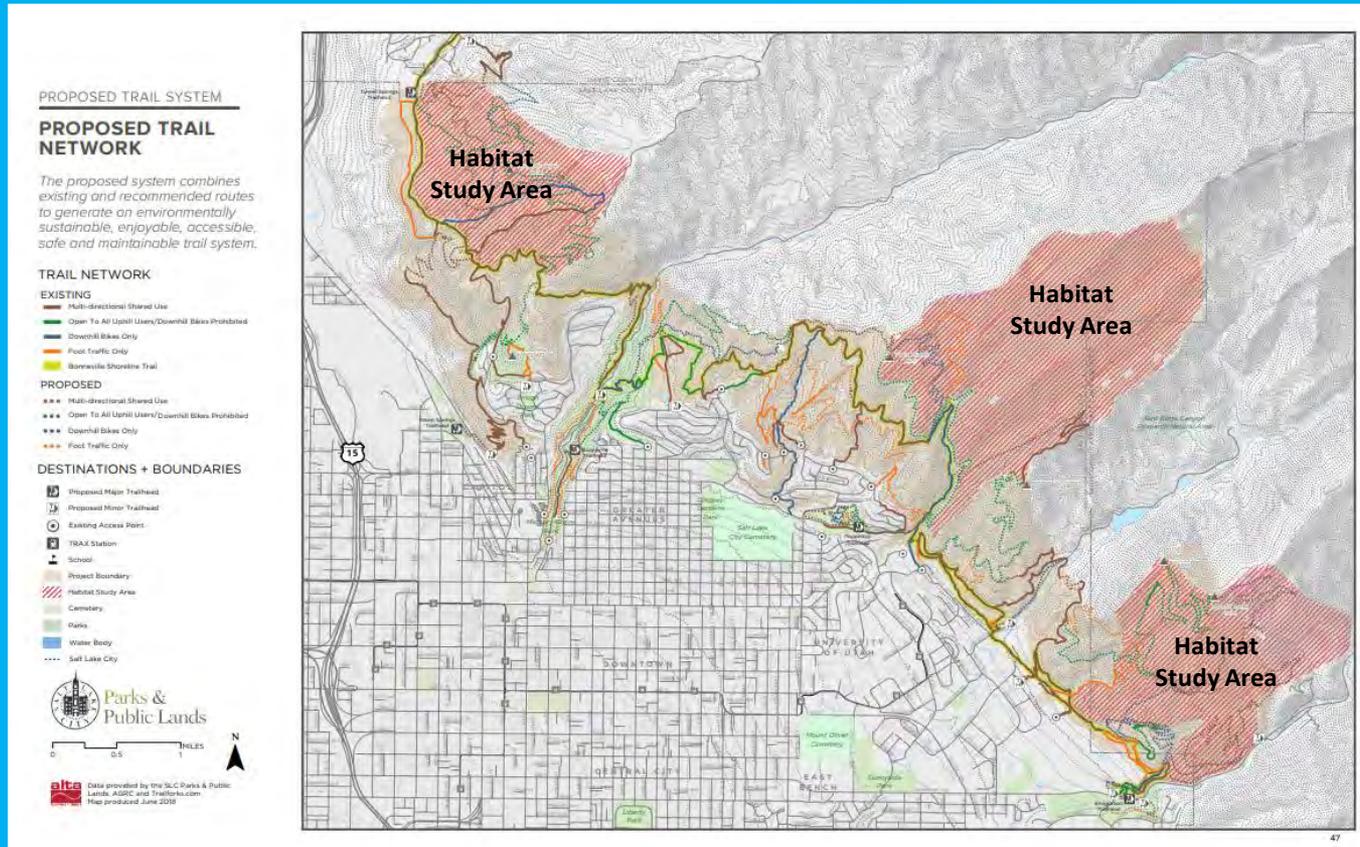


Trail surface destroyed by excavator



Phase 1 trenching and fencing of historic and sustainable trail in the name of “revegetation”.

5) Lack of appropriate scientific and user studies prior to initiation of trail construction



Trail System Plan Map for the Salt Lake City Foothills showing "Habitat Study Areas"

Scientific studies that should have been done prior to trail construction include:

- ecological
- wildlife habitat
- cultural
- historical
- slope stability
- soil
- watershed
- recreational use



Foothills Trail System Update

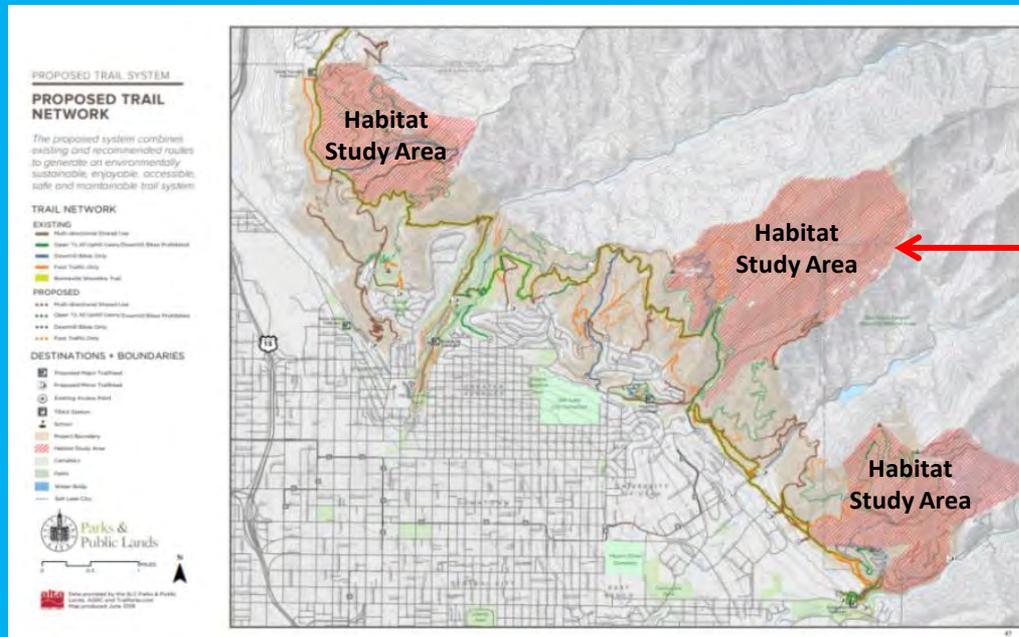
What has changed since July 2021?

Based on concerns with the Trails System Plan voiced by *Save Our Foothills, Save Our Canyons* and numerous SLC residents, a “pause” on trail construction was announced by Mayor Mendenhall in July 2021, and in September 2021 the pause was extended by the Mayor until June 1, 2022.

In December 2021 Public Lands hired the environmental consulting firm SWCA to evaluate:

- 1) Trail impacts on plant and wildlife
- 2) Trail impacts on soil
- 3) Scenic impacts of trails
- 4) Cultural impacts of trails
- 5) Potential cultural significance of Foothills areas to Indigenous Tribes.

As of July 2022, the results of these studies have not yet been made public.



Identified
“Habitat Study Areas”
are hopefully included in
the SWCA environmental
analysis

Trails System Map showing habitat study areas identified in Trails System Plan.



Foothills Trail System Update

On March 10, 2022 Public Lands proposed an extension of the “pause” in trail construction until the Spring 2023 to allow a consulting firm to:

- 1) Evaluate trails constructed in 2020 and 2021
- 2) Re-evaluate existing demand on trails
- 3) Prepare a Foothills Trail System maintenance plan
- 4) Review trail “alignments” (locations) with regard to SWCA environmental analysis
- 5) Evaluate 2020 Foothills Trails System Plan and to recommend potential changes to the “plan”

Public Lands also asked for funds from the City Council to:

- Restore and revegetate the trenched “Avenues Ridgeline Trail”
- Undertake trail maintenance on collapsing trails constructed during 2020 and 2021
- Hire a consultant to assist with communications in order to:
 - 1) Promote sustainable trail culture
 - 2) Improve outreach and transparency for the Salt Lake City Community

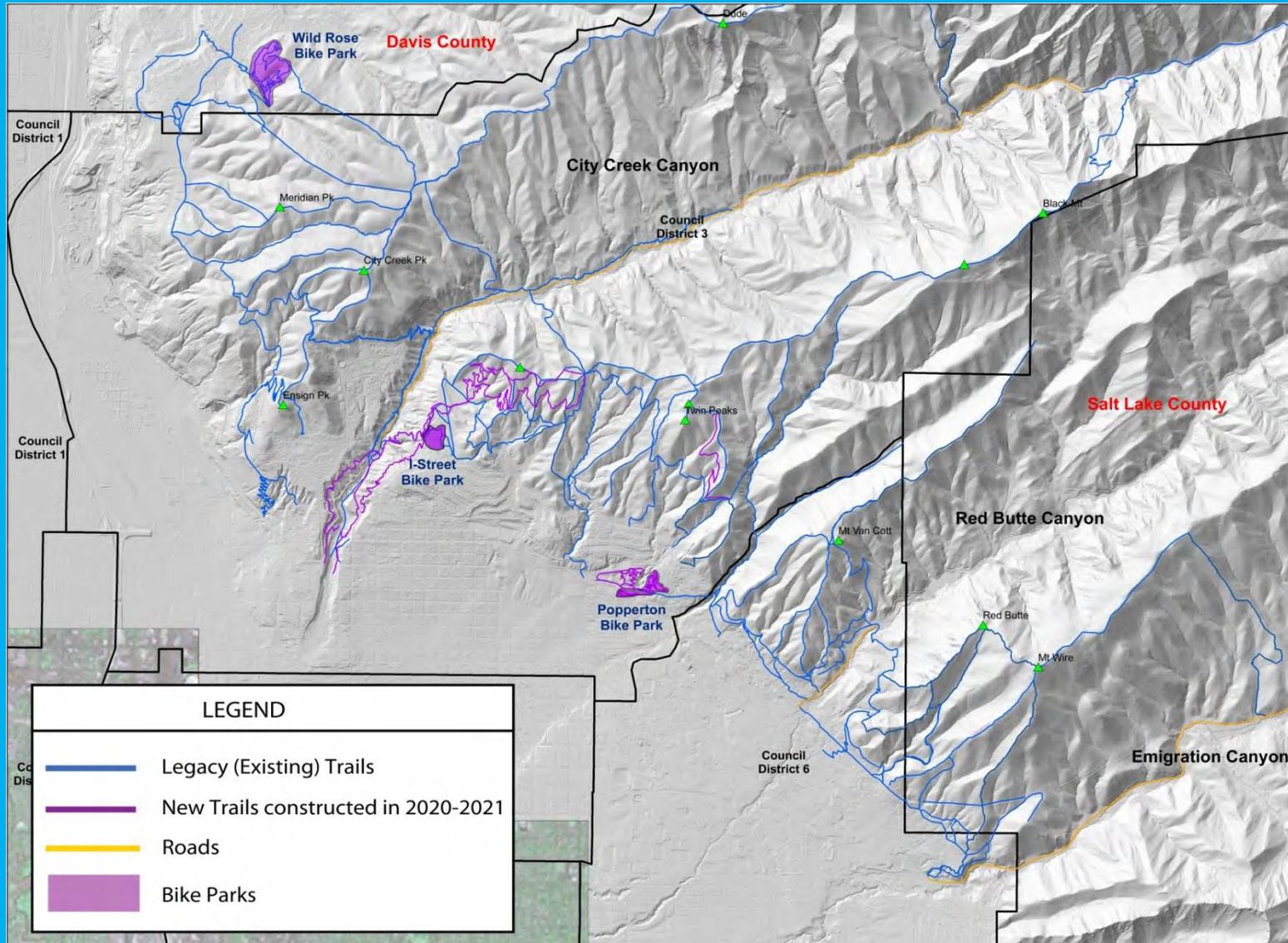


These requests, including the pause extension, were approved unanimously by the Salt Lake City Council and are supported by the Mayor and her administration.

Save Our Foothills supports the additional work proposed by Public Lands as well.

Save Our Foothills encourages Public Lands and the hired consultants to take the time to do a thorough job, and not rush the work in order to begin construction on a new set of trails

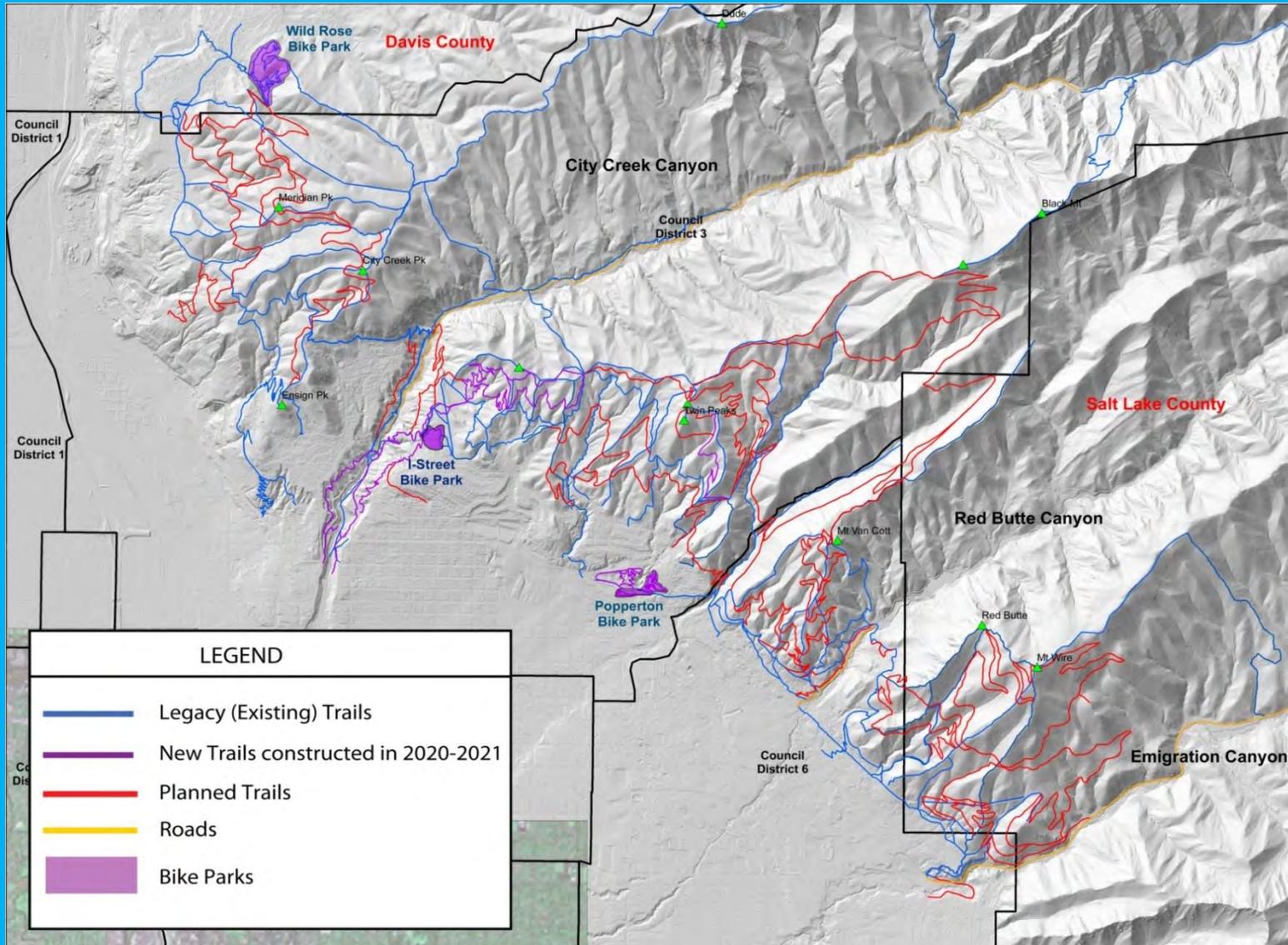
Where do we go from here?



Shaded relief map of the Salt Lake City Foothills showing pre-2020 Legacy trails and trails constructed in 2020 and 2021

Note: Over 100 miles of trails already exist in the Salt Lake City Foothills, for which there is no detailed inventory and for most of which there has been little or no maintenance.

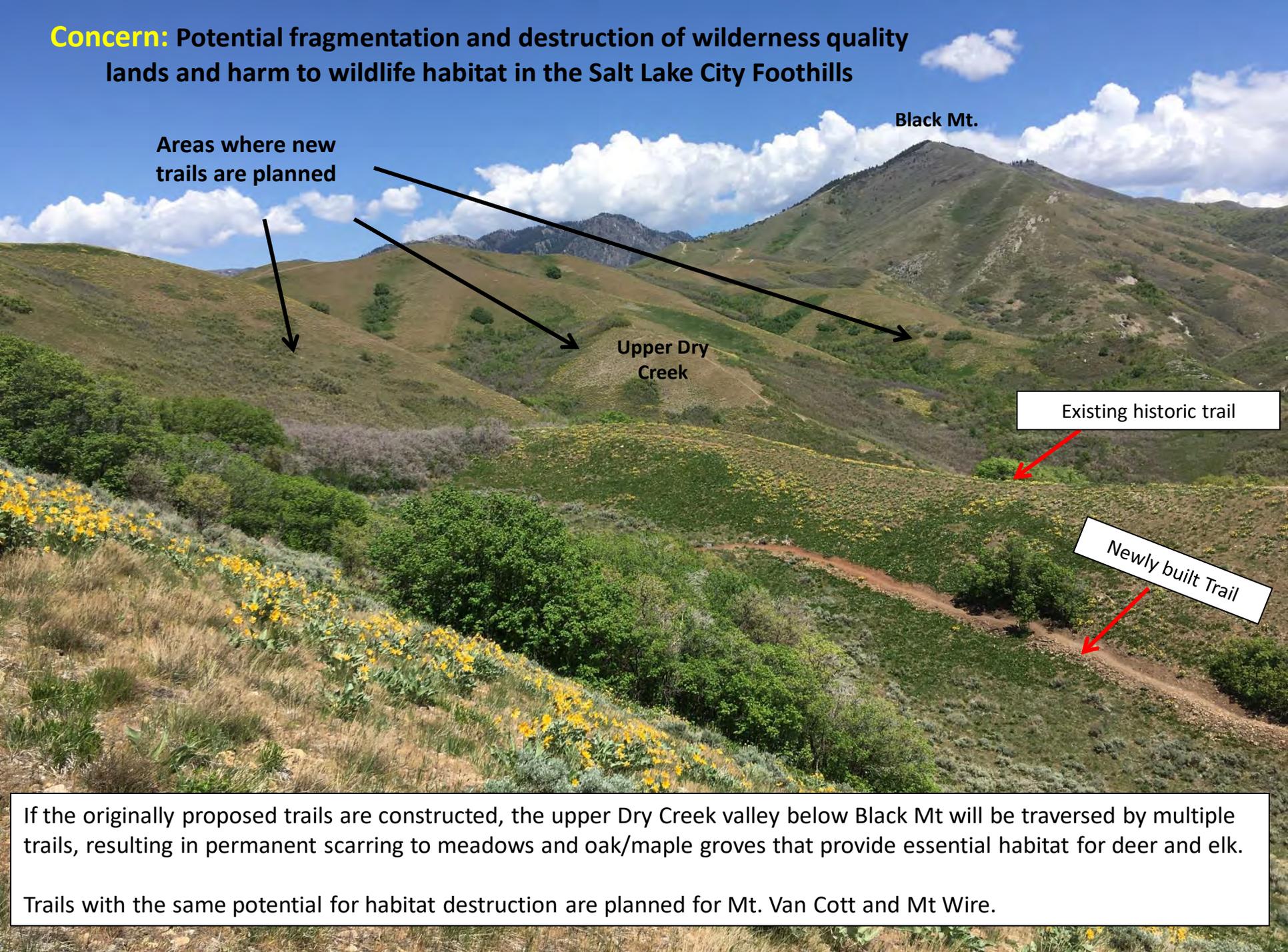
50 additional miles of trails have been proposed for the Foothills.



Shaded relief map of the Salt Lake City Foothills showing pre-2020 Legacy trails, trails constructed in 2020 and 2021, and trails planned by Salt Lake City over the next few years

Does Salt Lake City really need all of these additional trails?

Concern: Potential fragmentation and destruction of wilderness quality lands and harm to wildlife habitat in the Salt Lake City Foothills



Black Mt.

Areas where new trails are planned

Upper Dry Creek

Existing historic trail

Newly built Trail

If the originally proposed trails are constructed, the upper Dry Creek valley below Black Mt will be traversed by multiple trails, resulting in permanent scarring to meadows and oak/maple groves that provide essential habitat for deer and elk.

Trails with the same potential for habitat destruction are planned for Mt. Van Cott and Mt Wire.

Save Our Foothills

Present Goals of the Campaign

Work with and assist Salt Lake City in preparing an *updated, inclusive vision* for Salt Lake City's Foothills that *prioritizes environmental protection and seeks input from a diverse cross-section of Salt Lake City residents*. We encourage Salt Lake City Public Lands to:

1) Inventory existing trails

2) Prepare an *updated and science-based Land Use Management Plan* for the Foothills;

- Identify wilderness quality lands that should be protected for future generations
- Identify wildlife habitat that should be protected
- Work with Indigenous Tribes to identify lands that should be protected
- Identify lands suitable for continuing recreation
- Work with Indigenous Tribes to define appropriate recreation

3) Prepare a *comprehensive, data-driven Foothills Recreation Management Plan*

- Collect current user data for existing trails
- Define baseline for recreation and user data analysis
- Define areas that are suitable for different types of recreation
- Define areas appropriate for dispersed vs high-intensity recreation
- Incorporate inventoried existing trails



Save Our Foothills

Present Goals of the Campaign

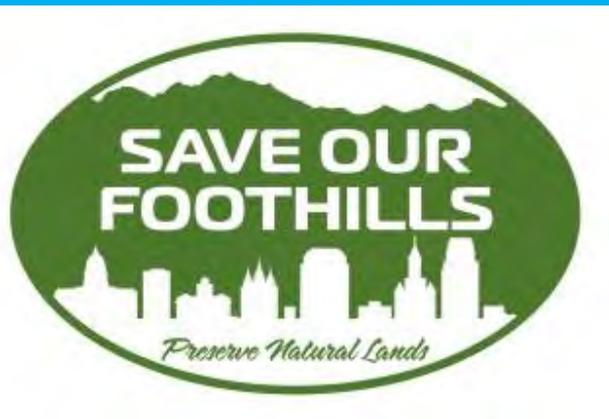
4) Prepare an *up-dated* Trails System Plan

- Prepare a [trail maintenance and management plan](#) for existing and future trails
- [Determine whether existing trails are sufficient](#), or if new trails are needed
- [Avoid areas identified for protection](#)
- Avoid duplication of trails
- Ensure protection of Salt Lake City's views

5) Engage in *comprehensive* community outreach and education regarding the Foothills

- Assess importance of preservation, recreation and access to different communities
- Educational outreach on natural and cultural history of the Foothills
- Educational outreach on trail use and etiquette

As a community we can preserve the environmental integrity of the Foothills while responsibly accommodating all Salt Lake City residents who enjoy this unique landscape.



Let's Take the Time to
Do This Right



Thank You
slcfoothills.org

This presentation can be viewed on the Save Our Foothills website

