



STAFF REPORT – CITY COUNCIL MEETING

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Emily Sinkhorn, Director of Environmental Services

PREPARER: Emily Sinkhorn, Director of Environmental Services

DATE: August 20, 2025

TITLE: **Approve the Arcata Community Forest Bike Skills Park Project.**

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Council approve the Arcata Community Forest Bike Skills Park Project.

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND:

The Arcata Community Forest provides many benefits to the City including recreational opportunities along designated trails for mountain bikers, hikers, and equestrian users; watershed and habitat benefits for the region; research opportunities; as well as economic benefits from sustainable forest management. Improving trail users' experience and safety while protecting the natural environment and ensuring sustainable timber production are priorities of the Forest Management Committee and the Environmental Services Department.

The proposed Bike Skills Park would be located adjacent to Trail 9 and the Peanut Butter and Jump Trails in the Arcata Community Forest. The Forest Management Committee has expressed support for the project. The Bike Skills Park Project will be completed in-house by City staff along with community volunteers utilizing industry acceptable design standards and best management practices in trail design.

DISCUSSION:

City staff were approached this past winter by a high school student and their mountain bike coach regarding a desire to support the City in developing a skills-focused area in the burgeoning hub for mountain biking in the Arcata Community Forest (ACF) – the top of the Peanut Butter and Jump Trails. The Humboldt Composite Mountain Bike Club supports middle and high school riders throughout the county and travels to compete on trails throughout the state, many with features not found along mountain bike trails in our area.

As the City continues to receive community requests to provide more beginner-friendly mountain biking features for folks of all ages to grow their skills, staff saw the opportunity to create a small skills park that could benefit a range of skill levels. The City has focused mountain bike use in a portion of the ACF, where new mountain bike specific trails have recently been built/upgraded, with

the benefit of creating a hub for mountain biking in the forest while also reducing potential trail user conflicts in other areas of the forest.

The purpose of the Bike Skills Park is to create a place for mountain bikers of all skill levels, particularly beginner and intermediate riders, to practice skill features needed to navigate more technical trails, such as rock gardens, wooden drops, skinnies (built wood features to practice balance) and rollers. These features are not available on other local trails in the Humboldt Bay region.

The proposed area for the Bike Skills Park is located adjacent to Trails 9 and 4 and the Peanut Butter and Jump Trails. The site is roughly a third of an acre with a gentle ~10% slope and would be accessed directly from the existing Trail 9 Service Road. This site in the forest has previously been disturbed and utilized as a log landing for forest management activities, most recently in 2020, and is currently covered in wood slash and vegetated with annual grasses, small native and invasive species.

As with many trails within the Arcata Community Forest, the skills park would be developed with the understanding that should the log landing need to be used again in the future for forest management activities (perhaps in ten years), the skills park would be removed and could be built back with updated features.

The project builds on and enhances a partnership with Redwood Coast Mountain Bike Association (RCMBA) and the Humboldt Composite Mountain Bike Club. The City of Arcata entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with RCMBA in 2021 formalizing the opportunity to engage RCMBA volunteers from the community in trail development and maintenance efforts.

The proposed improvements are minor in nature and would be a minor disturbance in an already disturbed forest management log landing area. A botanical survey and archaeological survey were conducted in early summer 2025 to inform environmental compliance.

Trail and feature construction will utilize trail development standards from the following manuals: California State Parks Trail Manual, the US Forest Service Trail Manual (FSM 2355), the USDA Forest Service Trails Management Handbook (FSH 23.09.18), USDA Standard Specifications for Construction and Maintenance of Trails (EM-7720-103, USDA/FHWA), and the 2004 International Mountain Biking- Trail Solutions Guide.

Construction would occur during the dry season (August-November 15) by City staff with small equipment and by volunteers with hand tools.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

The City Council has a goal under Resident and Community Health to provide recreational opportunities for all residents. The proposed improvements are consistent with the General Plan and the Forest Management Plan as it improves recreational activities while ensuring flexibility for future forest management within the landing area.

COMMITTEE REVIEW:

The Forest Management Committee reviewed this project during a field trip to the proposed project site on July 31, 2025. The Committee expressed support for the project to be located within an already disturbed log landing site.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (CEQA):

A CEQA Notice of Exemption (NOE) will be filed for the Bike Skills Park Project. The project involves minor alterations to an already disturbed existing forest management landing to create linear bicycle trails and riding features for a range of ages. The project qualifies for an exemption under Class 4 Minor Alterations to Land (CEQA Guidelines Sec. 15304 (a) (c)) which allows for the minor alterations in the condition of land that does not affect major vegetation or sensitive habitats and also under Class 3 New Construction of Small Structures (CEQA Guidelines Sec. 15303 (e)) due to construction of short wooden features for bicycle riding.

BUDGET/FISCAL IMPACT:

The minimal funding needed to implement the Bike Skills Park has been included in the 2025/2026 fiscal year budget under the Forest Fund.

RECOMMENDED COUNCIL ACTION:

Motion to approve the Arcata Community Forest Bike Skills Park Project.

Consent Calendar vote.

ATTACHMENTS:

A. Arcata Community Forest Bike Skills Park Map