



CONCEPT PROPOSAL



**IMAGINE
SETTING FOOT
IN HISTORY**



ISLAND REC
San Juan Island Park and Recreation District

Acknowledgments

With the support and enthusiasm of the members of the San Juan Island Trails Committee of San Juan Island Park and Recreation (Island Rec), the vision of a modern Old Military Road Trail (OMRT) linking English and American Camps was renewed with the formation of a working OMRT Committee. In June of 2019 the Committee earned the formal recognition and vital support of the Board of Commissioners of the San Juan Island Park and Recreation District. Both the Island Rec Board and the Trails Committee gave the project a much appreciated kick-start.

This concept proposal is a work in progress and will need annual review and revision for changing circumstances. The proposal highlights aspects of the 2006 San Juan Island Trails Committee plan which relates to the work of the OMRT Committee. The OMRT Committee is supported by the Trails Committee of Island Rec but is a separate entity.

The OMRT Committee recognizes all the organizations whose initial and steadfast support has allowed the project to advance. The Committee continues to explore the many opportunities and challenges presented by the vision of a pathway down the center of San Juan Island. It will take many years and people to create the pathway, but with one step at a time and the aid of many partners, the OMRT Committee believes both camps of the San Juan Island National Historic Park will once again be linked by a trail as they were over 160 years ago.

The Old Military Road Trail Committee honors the long human history that predates the construction of the original Old Military Road. San Juan Island has been part of the ancestral homelands of the Coast Salish people for thousands of years. Indigenous people were drawn to the island by the abundance of available food, including camas roots and other plants, a variety of berries, deer, fish, and numerous types of shellfish. The people living on and visiting San Juan Island today, both tribal and non-tribal, owe a debt of gratitude to the indigenous people down through the centuries who so capably preserved and protected the beautiful island we enjoy today.

Key Partners:

- San Juan Island Park and Recreation District (Island Rec)
- San Juan Island National Historical Park
- San Juan County Land Bank
- San Juan Preservation Trust
- San Juan Island Historical Society and Museum
- Roche Harbor Resort

The OMRT Committee wishes to thank the many individuals who have already signed up as official supporters or as active volunteers helping with critical early work. Many more individuals and groups will join the OMRT effort as sections of the trail are planned in detail, developed, and opened. For a more complete and up-to-date list of all supporters and information on how to become a supporter, see the official OMRT website: www.oldmilitaryroadtrail.org.



The National Park Service Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program helped the OMRT committee with coordination and capacity building, and provided technical assistance with active transportation research, mapping and graphic production. Their help is greatly appreciated.

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Executive Summary

The vision

This Concept Proposal embraces the vision of a new trail to celebrate the “Old Military Road” that created a link between two camps of opposing military forces in the mid-1800s. The vision is simple: a modern, multi-use trail wherever possible from English to American Camp to serve as a backbone trail down San Juan Island.

The vision of a long-desired link between the Camps was noted in the 2006 Trails Plan prepared by the San Juan Island Trails Committee of the San Juan Island Park and Recreation District (Island Rec) and long-range plans of the San Juan Island National Historical Park. The Old Military Road Trail Committee (OMRT), a sub-committee of Island Rec, has worked since March of 2019 to evaluate options, address concerns and prepare this Concept Proposal.

Exemplifying the island’s past, present, and future spirit of cooperation, the OMRT project is possible through a grand coalition: extensive public input; guidance and technical assistance from the staff of the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, Conservation Assistance Program; coordination by local volunteers; and support from numerous local organizations and businesses. Trail construction, associated amenities, and future maintenance will be made possible through grants, private fundraising, and local philanthropic sources.

The time is right for this trail

- The San Juan Island community has substantial enthusiasm for more trails and recognition of local island history.
- Many public and private organizations have pledged support for the concept of this cross-island heritage trail.
- More than ever during the COVID-19 pandemic, local residents recognize the benefits of trails and healthy exercise.
- The growing number of bicyclists, runners and walkers on busy island roads has increased safety concerns and points to the need for additional off-road trails to accommodate recreation.

Five major goals guide the work of the OMRT Committee. Each goal complements the others and integrates this Concept Proposal.

- 1 Historical, cultural & educational goal:** The history of San Juan Island spans centuries, cultures, and countries, with a unique place in the story of our country and the development of an American northwest. The OMRT is centrally positioned to highlight important cultural sites and contributions of the several Indigenous Peoples of the Salish Sea, the economic history of the Hudson Bay Company, the farms and experiences of early European settlers, the “Pig War” military dispute and occupation by American and British forces, and, of course, the first major road on San Juan Island. While the island’s beauty is self-evident, the history is not. The OMRT would create a place for present and future generations to see, feel, and experience the past and their place in the continuous living story of the island.

2 Pedestrian, biking & transportation safety goal: The rural roads of San Juan Island have long been popular with bicyclists and pedestrians. Currently the only way to travel from English Camp to American Camp is on public roads, which are often narrow and in places not safe for pedestrians and families on bikes. The OMRT would separate motorized vehicles from pedestrians and cyclists providing a more safe trail experience along much of its path across the island. Fewer conflicts between road users will make our roads safer for everyone, particularly children and families.

3 Conservation goal: People of all generations need places to experience the natural world, to see ecosystems in action, and, as Wendell Berry writes “to rest in the grace of the world and [be] free”. The island’s current and future generations will appreciate the connection to San Juan’s beauty and natural history. From shore to prairie and forest, a trail traversing the island invites a journey through these varied ecosystems and helps prepare our children to one day step into their role as land stewards. Protecting valuable wildlife habitat, sensitive natural areas and scenic views must be a primary consideration. In turn, creating a sustainable balance between natural resource use and protection - while connecting people to the land - is the goal of this cross-island trail project.

4 Health & recreation goal: The link between regular exercise and good health is well documented. Several sources noted in the Proposal highlight the role that easy access to trails in beautiful outdoor settings has in motivating people to improve their physical and mental health through outdoor exercise. The OMRT will provide

islanders and visitors alike with a number of convenient access points along the 18-21 mile trail that will traverse through a variety of the island’s signature pastoral and forested landscapes and link up with a number of other existing trails, parks and preserves.

5 Public engagement & outreach goal: Numerous private individuals and key organizations support the vision of the Old Military Road Trail and are listed on the website at www.oldmilitaryroadtrail.org. Public outreach and engagement via the Communication Plan will increase support and guide the outreach efforts of the Committee and have already been positively received. The challenges of the pandemic and its economic aftermath have guided the 2020 priorities of the OMRT Committee. Despite changing circumstances, the Committee has continued to safely work to advance this proposal and the OMRT through virtual channels. When conditions allow, we look forward to resuming a more robust face-to-face engagement process with the public.



Trail near Zylstra Lake Preserve
Photo: Todd Kaden

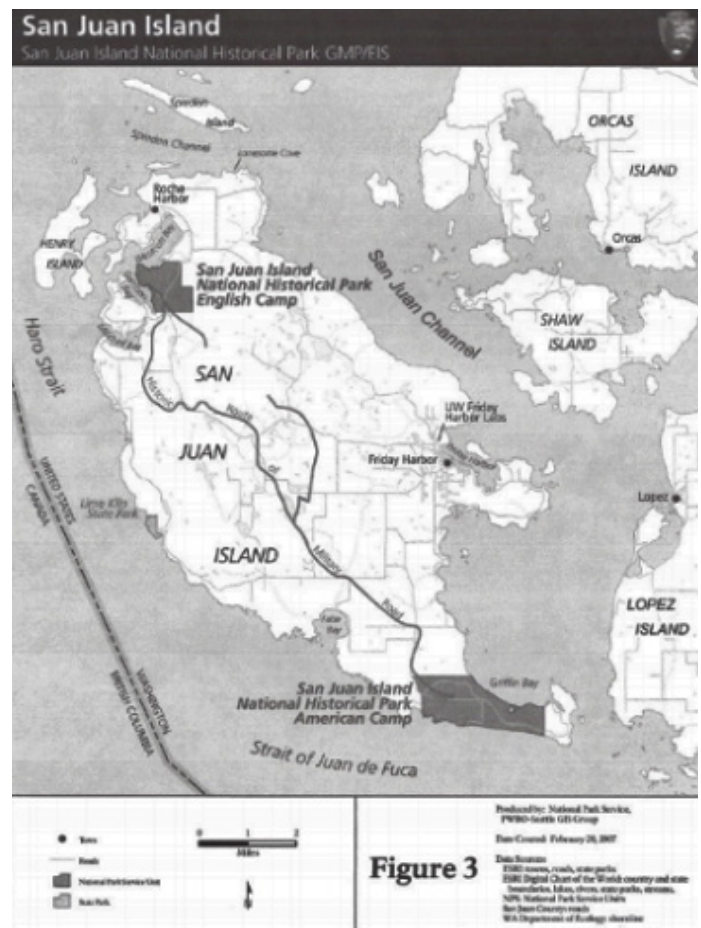
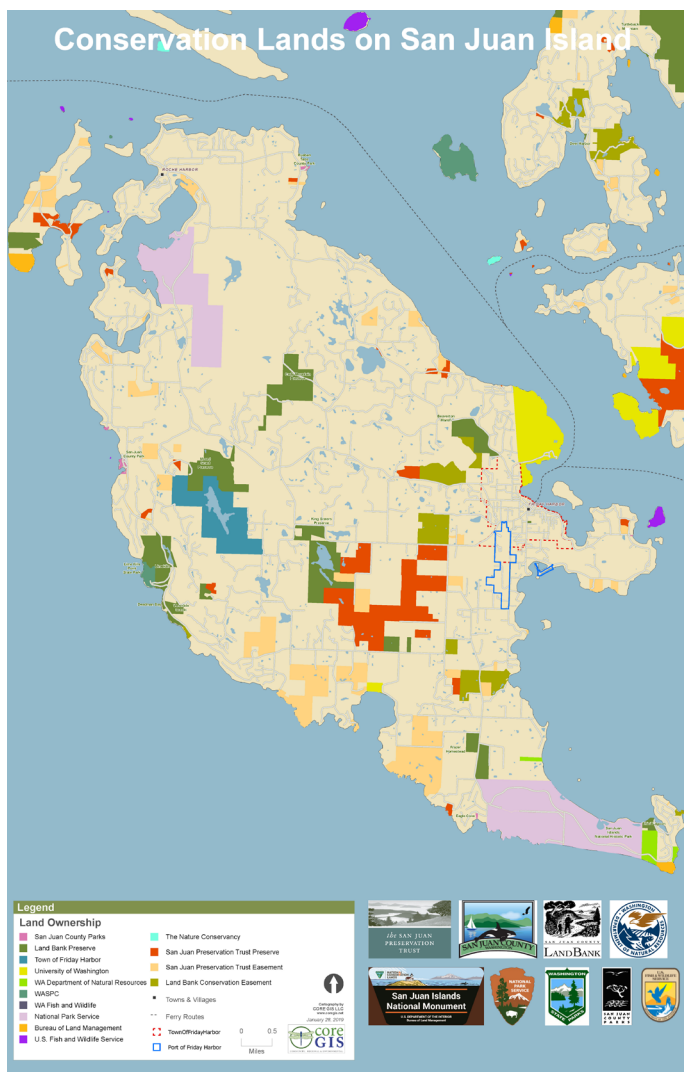
The Proposed Route

After many discussions between the OMRT Committee and representatives of agencies owning conserved land on San Juan Island, a realistic possibility for this trail slowly emerged. A new OMR Trail could link conserved lands owned by the SJC Land Bank and the owners of the Roche Harbor Highlands to ultimately connect the English and American Camp units of the San Juan Island National Historical Park and, in turn, to other trails and destinations.

This commemorative trail would cross but not follow exactly the original historic route. Instead, it would track a ‘spur’ route east of Cady Mtn. to maximize the potential of connecting as many conserved lands as possible

and still be near the original route. Wetlands, challenging topography, and private land ownership along the original historic route were also dominant factors favoring this strategy. The Committee is working closely with the National Park Service, SJC Land Bank, and other private landowners regarding the proposed route.

By 2020 it became clear the proposed 18-21 mile route should be planned in segments and would likely not be continuous initially. By using both conserved lands and public road rights-of-way where necessary, new trails could be environmentally feasible and more economical. Options for final connection of initial segments will be pursued in the coming decade and beyond.



The proposed trail route is broken into eight segments. Six segments are targeted for completion in the first decade, with known route links as shown on the map below. Each of the eight segments highlight different opportunities and each one will require engagement with different communities or private entities.

A new trail over so many miles will require detailed plans when each segment is created. Several years may be necessary for any segment to complete the needed steps: community engagement, planning, volunteer organizing, funding, permitting, construction and maintenance.

Trail users, topography, and vegetation vary along the route, requiring trail specifications to be determined once the exact route and types of use are known.

The proposal concludes with guidelines and rules for trail users and maintenance plans. Experience from other trails provides guidance for ensuring safe use while reducing maintenance costs with volunteer labor and support from various organizations.

This proposed route provides a realistic option to begin this ambitious endeavor, linking so many stunning destinations on San Juan Island.



San Juan Island Community and Background Information

San Juan Island is the largest of 176 named islands and reefs that make up San Juan County, tucked in the far northwest corner of Washington State. The island has just over 8,000 full-time residents as of a 2018 census, making it the most populated of the county's roughly 20 inhabited islands and the home of about half of the county's overall population. It houses the county's only incorporated town, Friday Harbor, which serves as the county seat and commercial hub of the islands. At 55 square miles, San Juan is the 2nd largest island in the county, being slightly smaller than neighboring Orcas Island, and is one of four county islands served by the Washington State Ferry System. There are no bridges connecting the San Juan Islands to the mainland.

From the time Coast Salish people first inhabited San Juan Island thousands of years ago, fishing, farming and gathering food were mainstays of the local way of life. Euro-American settlement in the mid to late-1800s saw a continuance of this fishing and farming lifestyle. Today, however, San Juan Island's economy is based on recreational tourism, second-home development, and the retirement industry. The county as a whole has an aging population, with the fastest growing age group being 50 and over. Most residents choose to live here for the natural beauty and small-town rural community lifestyle. The island has a diverse mix of landscapes, ranging from fertile agricultural land, rolling hills, forested hillsides, small mountains, and miles of shoreline and beaches. About 30% of the county is designated as agricultural or forest resource land, and there are roughly 11 miles of publicly-accessible shoreline.

Residents and visitors alike cherish stunning rural and Salish Sea vistas. Diverse wildlife inhabits the island - from Orca whales, harbor seals, sea lions, and river otters in the surrounding waters to red foxes, black-tailed deer, rabbits and raccoons on land. An equally diverse number of bird species call the island home on either a full-time or seasonal basis. These include bald eagles, golden eagles, osprey, hawks, Canada geese, ravens, crows, loons, ducks, cormorants, swans, hummingbirds, and a great variety of songbirds. As well, San Juan and Lopez Islands are the only known locations in the world of the sublime Marble Butterfly.

There are a handful of beautiful national, state, and county parks dotting the shoreline. On the west side of the island, San Juan County Park and Lime Kiln Point State Park look out to Vancouver Island and Haro Strait, which forms the international boundary between the U.S. and Canada. Lime Kiln Point State Park, known locally as Whale Watch Park, takes its name from the period of island history from the mid-1800s to the early 1900s when the mining, processing and export of lime was a key part of the island's economy.

San Juan Island National Historical Park is composed of more than 2,100 acres in two units located 13 miles apart. The park commemorates the peaceful resolution of the San Juan Boundary Dispute, or "Pig War," between the United States and Great Britain from 1859 to 1872, when each country sent troops to occupy the island to uphold their territorial claim to the San Juan Islands. The Military Road between the two allowed for communication, interaction and peaceful cooperation between the two entities. The 13-year peaceful standoff ended in 1872 when a third party arbiter, Kaiser Wilhelm



Existing trail near the historic Old Military Road spur near English Camp

Photo: Tim Dustrude

I of Germany, determined that the international boundary should be west of San Juan Island in the middle of Haro Strait, where it remains today. This is why the San Juan Islands are part of the U.S. now and not Canada.

San Juan Island is also home to two full-service marinas and a world-renown marine research station. The Port of Friday Harbor marina on the east side of the island where the Washington State Ferry docks is the gateway to the Town of Friday Harbor. The northwest end of the island boasts Roche Harbor Resort, a destination marina and resort that features a historic 19th century hotel. The University of Washington's Friday Harbor Labs, near the Port of Friday Harbor, attracts marine scientists from around the world, both to teach and to conduct cutting-edge research in the surrounding waters.

There are over 50 miles of existing multi-use (including hiking, biking, running and equestrian) trails on San Juan Island. Islanders voice widespread support for trails, with more than 77% of residents ranking trails in natural areas and parks as a high priority. Islanders also strongly support the inclusion of safe bike routes in the development of future trail systems (see 2017-2022 Parks, Trails, and Natural Area Plan and Non-motorized Plan Ordinance 12-2016). The OMRT Committee was created in the spring of 2019 to help satisfy these needs by advocating for the creation of an 18-21 mile multi-use backbone trail connecting the National Park Service's American Camp and English Camp units.

Existing Conditions

Existing Plans

The Old Military Road Trail will complement a central goal of the San Juan Island Trails plan of 2006 to create a network of interconnected trails to major destinations on San Juan Island. The “English Camp - American Camp Link” in the 2006 trail plan was deemed a “priority II trail,” meaning supported by the public but requiring incremental implementation over the long term due to its location, distance, and the complexities surrounding land ownership. A large portion of the original Military Road route crosses what is now private property and the possibility of establishing a long-distance trail following the historic road is impractical. **This new 2020 proposal for an OMRT would not precisely follow the historic original route except at a few locations.**

The proposed OMRT would further the ‘top-priority’ projects noted in the 2017-2022 San Juan County Parks, Trails, Natural Areas Plan and Non-Motorized Transportation Plan which stated a goal to “create and enhance non-motorized connections between existing public lands, activity centers and other areas of interest.” That Plan also called for San Juan County to “explore opportunities to provide trails that are separated from roads.”

The 2018 Washington State Trails Plan seeks to build a connected network to accommodate use within neighborhoods, connect communities together, and provide access to the backcountry and wilderness areas. On San Juan Island the proposed OMRT adheres to the state plan as it would connect neighborhoods and bring residents together to enjoy the beauty of the open countryside and natural woodlands.

In November, 2018, San Juan County adopted a Complete Streets ordinance in order to direct transportation planners and engineers to design and build streets that enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. In the words of former Councilmember Rick Hughes, “Every time we do something for a road it needs to have a solution that provides pedestrian and bicycle pathways.” The Old Military Road Trail provides an opportunity to advance the County’s goal of providing safe transportation options for a variety of users throughout San Juan Island.

Surveys & Studies

The San Juan Island Visitor Study, conducted in 2018 for the Terrestrial Managers Group (TMG), identified natural scenery, wildlife viewing, and mountain biking among the top six reasons that people choose to reside on San Juan Island. The survey showed that approximately 10% of the 537 San Juan Island residents surveyed own a bicycle but about 80% use a car to access recreational opportunities. As a result of the survey, the TMG proposed thirty projects to jump-start a multi-agency cooperative action plan. Among these projects were a Friday Harbor to Westside Preserve separated bicycle path, a Friday Harbor to American Camp bicycle path (separated and roadside paths), a Cattle Point to American Camp multi-use trail, and a Zylstra Lake to False Bay multi-use trail, an eventual section of the OMRT. These proposed projects would increase bicycle and pedestrian safety on some of the most trafficked island roadways and increase non-motorized access to recreational opportunities.

Community Health

A 2019-2022 Community Health Needs Assessment identifies active living as a key pillar of a healthy community. The plan envisions a community where the environment and resources enables people of all ages and abilities to be physically active. The assessment reveals the alarming finding that eighty-two percent of 10th graders in San Juan County experience insufficient physical activity. Moreover, San Juan County residents have slightly higher rates of heart disease and diabetes or are limited from activities by mental or physical health relative to the rest of Washington State. Eighty-one percent of Seniors (Age 65+) in San Juan County are living with a chronic disease, compared to 77% in WA State. For every age in our community

the OMRT would provide the opportunity for greater health through exercising safely outdoors and in nature (PeaceHealth).

Access to Existing Trails

The map of San Juan Island showing road connections to the many trail systems reflects the need for more trails that will not require using county roads. The first southern mile of the green American Camp Trail is on the Old Military Road and would be incorporated in the OMRT system. Many of these routes and trails would help provide OMRT access.



Goals

1 History, culture, & education goal

Each segment of the Old Military Road Trail tells a compelling story about the island's history and culture. The trail would explore the rich Native American culture that thrived here for thousands of years before the first Euro-Americans sailed into Salish Sea waters. The OMRT would also highlight how the peaceful resolution of the international boundary dispute between Great Britain and the U.S. in the mid-1800s, was in part due to effective and timely communication through the use of the Military Road. The road eventually led to the development of a prosperous island community and economy built on farming, fishing, timber and ore resources. Informational signage would be located at key locations along the trail to highlight various aspects of both indigenous and Euro-American historical legacies.

Segments one and two of the OMRT, from American Camp to False Bay, would highlight how the Coast Salish people have been living in the San Juan Islands for thousands years. The early inhabitants sustainably harvested abundant salmon runs using a number of methods, including a unique reef netting technique, off Cattle Point, Eagle Cove and Mosquito Pass, all near the proposed OMRT or offshoots. A number of local tribal descendants today continue to commercially fish in both the Salish Sea and beyond. Early inhabitants also collected shellfish in shoreline waters, such as in False Bay, and gathered edible plants such as camas bulbs from the surrounding prairies. Trail users would be informed how Coast Salish practiced land stewardship by seasonal burns of the upland meadows and prairies to encourage the regeneration of edible plants and bulbs. Sustainable farming techniques are still being practiced by tribal descendants on the island today.



Camas on prairie at American Camp
Photo: Mike Vouri



When Peter Lawson announced he was going to build this barn in 1874, he was told the structure would never withstand the winter winds that howl up the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Undaunted, Lawson started work, and a barn-raising was organized by his neighbors. The barn still stands, and the broad axe used to hew the beams is on view at the San Juan Historical Museum. Photo: Tim Dustrude



Remnants of the Old Military Road spur on Mitchell Hill
Photo: Tim Dustrude



Lizzie Lawson transfers grain from wagon to stack in preparation for threshing on her father Peter Lawson's Eagle Point farm, Photo: San Juan Historical Society and Museum

Signage on the southeast end of the island would discuss historical events in the mid-1800s and Salish tribe history. The trail would pass very close to the original Belle Vue Farm, primarily a sheep operation established by the British-owned Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) in 1853, the first sustained attempt by Euro-Americans to settle and develop San Juan Island. In 1859 a pig wandering from Belle Vue Farm ignited the 13-year long peaceful military occupation when it was shot and killed by Lyman Cutlar, an American homesteader, fed up with the pig rooting up his potato patch. The OMRT's first mile follows the actual Old Military Road built with Cowichan labor and would pass close by the site of Cutlar's farm. Trail users on this segment would see broad grassy fields and meadows, promising places for Salish tribes to hunt and gather camas bulbs, and later the HBC, early settlers and homesteaders to raise crops and a variety of grazing livestock. On their way to the biologically fertile False Bay, trail users would pass near an historic old barn built in 1863.

Segments 3-5 would traverse the central part of the island, celebrating its agricultural history and blending of many cultural traditions. From False Bay to north of Zylstra Lake, picturesque

pastoral views of San Juan Valley and signage along the way would highlight the role that farming and agriculture have played in the island's economy and community life during the last 150+ years. Many of these early island farms and homesteads were operated by cross-cultural families, which consisted of a ethnic variety of Euro-American men and their Coast Salish wives, the latter of whom played a vital role in the island community. According to local historian Boyd Pratt, these women "knew how to cook, hunt, farm, do everything. The white settlers would not have survived without them."

During the late 1800s and early 1900s a number of island farms grew a variety of fruits and vegetables for market, while others raised grains such as barley, oats, and wheat. These early farms utilized the Old Military Road and its spurs to transport their crops to market. Today, island farms, from those with hay fields and livestock, to organic truck farms and orchards, carry on the island's long agricultural history. Until 1963 when a dam was built to aid irrigation, the Old Military Trail ran right through what is now Zylstra Lake. Trail users today would be able to travel for a mile and a half next to the Lake and read about it's fascinating history and the more than 60 bird species seasonally present there.

The final Segments 6-8 would showcase the island's forests and timber history. From the Cady Mountain area to English Camp, the trail passes through some of the island's signature forest land that was important to both the Coast Salish people and Euro-Americans. The Coast Salish harvested trees to construct their winter longhouses and canoes amidst forests teeming with deer, game, and plants essential to their diet.

Island forests have also played a central role in the development of the San Juan Island economy since the days of the boundary dispute in the mid-1800s. While traveling on the OMRT near Young Hill, one would be able to clearly see portions of the original spur road built by members of the British garrison at English Camp, probably for harvesting of Cady Mountain timber. The rusting hulk of an old abandoned car on Mitchell Hill is evidence that the spur road may have continued to be in use well into the 20th century. Signage would tell the story of how, as the island's population and economy grew in the latter 1800s and first half of the 1900s, the need for a steady supply of timber was evident. Island trees were harvested to build steamships and provide fuel to power these ships. Later, wood fuel was needed to power the kilns to process the lime being mined from island quarries, a prime ingredient in concrete. Wood was also used to make barrels and boxes to transport island-grown commodities. Other signage would show how to identify various tree species, as well as explore the wide variety of flora and fauna.

National Park signage at the northern terminus of the OMRT at the present-day English Camp parade ground provides detailed history of the British garrison stationed here for most of the Pig War era. Trail users would also learn how the Coast Salish people once lived here along the shore, evidenced by the large amounts of shell middens and archeological remains. Garrison Bay offers an abundance of clams, shellfish, and a variety of waterfowl. A short walk to upland



Totem pole and story boards at English Camp on Garrison Bay, gifted to the San Juan Island National Historical Park in 2016 by the Lummi Tribe in celebration of the tribe's ancestral claim on the land. Photo: Leif Hoffman

meadows shows where edible nuts, plants, roots, and berries could be gathered and game hunted.

The OMRT would provide a rich educational resource for island schools. Teachers and island families would have the opportunity to take field trips to enhance appreciation of island history and ecology. Local high schoolers and youth organizations could assist with service projects to establish and maintain the trail, helping to create this ongoing legacy.



The Lawsons, Roslers, Lighthearts, Landahls, and Thrones gather for yet another party at the Thrones farm at Rosler and Cattle Point roads

Photo: San Juan Historical Society and Museum



In 1861 Tsimshian (Ts'msyen) Anna Pike Rosler arrived from Alaska with her family to fish the Salmon Bank. She married Christopher Rosler, a recently discharged German immigrant soldier from American Camp

Photo: San Juan Historical Society and Museum



19th century prairie harvest on San Juan Island, with Mt. Finlayson in the background

Photo: San Juan Island National Historical Park



Rusted car off Old Military Road spur on Mitchell Hill

Photo: Shaun Hubbard

The story to be told along the OMRT is a rich and fascinating one. The Old Military Road enabled the rival posts to build trust through effective communication, highlighting the importance of peaceful diplomacy. The OMRT similarly provides an opportunity to honor the spirit and legacy of Coast Salish peoples, whose ancestors lived in harmony with their surroundings and whose descendants are members of the island community today, as well as to recognize the contributions made by early island settlers and homesteaders.

2 Pedestrian, biking, & transportation safety goal

Not only do islanders solidly back the creation of more local trails, they overwhelmingly support (>80%) developing ways to separate bike and vehicle traffic on island roads that are highly used. (Fig. 1, p. 16). Across the U.S. pedestrian and bicycle fatalities increased by 32% from 2008-2017. During this same period total traffic deaths decreased by 0.8%. Almost three-fourths of these pedestrian fatalities (73%) and more than half of the bicycling deaths (58%) did not occur at intersections (Pedestrian). According to the Washington Traffic Safety Commission, walkers and bicyclists accounted for 18.6% of traffic deaths in our state from 2013-2017, and 22.5% of serious traffic-related injuries. Unfortunately, the number of pedestrians and cyclists killed or injured on the state's roads is increasing (Washington).

During the warmer months of the year island drivers share the road with an increasing number of walkers, runners and bicyclists. The 2019 survey done for the County shows clear support for creating separated infrastructure to decrease the number of conflicts between bicyclists and drivers on island roads (Fig. 1). With much of the 18-21 mile OMRT off-road, islanders will have more opportunity to safely recreate outdoors in a beautiful setting, and drivers will have fewer encounters with pedestrians and bicyclists on island roads.

The completion of the OMRT would provide a win-win for islanders who want more outdoor recreational opportunities in our beautiful forests and pastoral valleys and safer driving conditions on our increasingly crowded island roads. It would expand the island's trail network and enhance the overall quality of life by improving safety on island roads and providing a healthy recreational trail experience for islanders for generations to come.

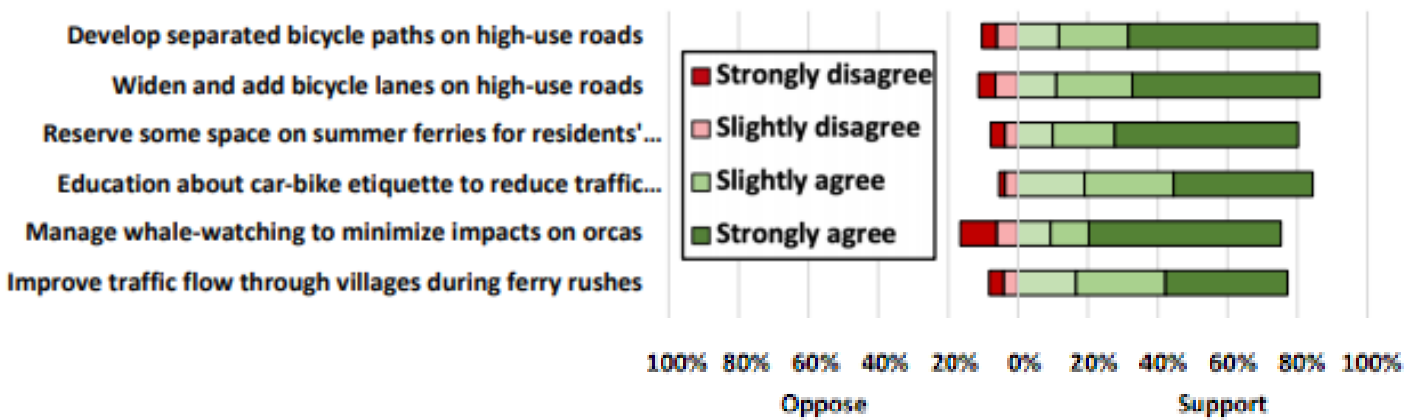


Fig. 1: Residents' Opinions about Specific Management Actions
 Source: Tourism and Visitor Management in the San Juan Islands, Confluence Research & Consulting, January 2020



Hikers enjoying a walk in the woods

Photo: Tim Dustrude

3 Conservation goal

The OMRT project affords several opportunities to explore the conservation of the natural environment. By linking current trails on conserved lands and the two units of the National Historical Park, the OMRT would connect different ecosystems and scenic landscapes to help tell the story of the area's natural history. This endeavor could help to strengthen the preservation values for conserved land by offering current and future generations an opportunity to learn about the local natural environment and how island inhabitants have shaped it over millennia.

The OMRT also provides a chance to highlight sustainable land use. A careful assessment of soils, geology, local flora and fauna, transitional zones, vegetation and freshwater resources will guide trail route selection as well as specific construction techniques. In some locations, new trail may parallel existing county roads in areas that have already been disturbed. Regardless of past land use, opportunities exist

to preserve native vegetation, enhance wildlife habitat, and remove noxious species. Creating buffer zones between trail, agricultural lands, and environmentally vulnerable areas will be essential. Minimizing the overall impact on the natural landscape and biodiversity will further current and ongoing conservations efforts.

Educational signage could provide insight on a variety of conservation-related topics. Fluctuating sea levels over past centuries, the sustainable land use of indigenous peoples, biodiversity, optimal agricultural practices, and the unique geology of this archipelago are a few examples. Physical signage and links to multimedia presentations could offer informative interpretation, graphics, illustrations, and photography to give viewers the opportunity to learn about the past, present, and future shaping of our environment. Here families could engage through memorable outdoor adventures and current stewardship efforts, developing an appreciation of the balance that can be achieved between conservation, commercial land use, and low-impact recreation in a location that is convenient, safe, and accessible.

4

Health & recreation goal

It's widely accepted today that outdoor exercise helps contribute to both our physical and mental health and well-being. Trails provide opportunity for exercise, solace, and a place in nature to be together with family and friends. They offer a quiet space to regroup and re-energize, reflect and contemplate. Walking, running or riding on trails builds up body strength, especially when recovering from injuries and ill-health. The healing power of Nature for children and adults is well documented by Richard Louv (Louv, 2005, as cited in St.-Esprit McKivigan, 2002).

Many Americans struggle with health issues such as obesity, diabetes, and mental wellness, which more outdoor recreational activity can help rectify. According to a study done by

researchers at Florida Atlantic University and published in Science Daily in 2015, approximately 36% of U.S. adults don't engage in any leisure time activity. This lack of physical exercise contributes to 22% of colon cancers, 22% of coronary heart disease, 18% of osteoporotic fractures, 12% of hypertension and diabetes, and 5% of breast cancers (Florida, 2015).

According to another recent study people who spend at least two hours per week in green spaces, such as parks, forests, and beaches, are much more likely to report that they feel better, both physically and mentally, than people who don't spend this amount of time immersed in nature. Other research suggests that those who would use trails like the OMRT to exercise or unwind will feel benefits associated with lower stress and blood pressure levels, decreased anxiety, reduced nervous system arousal, and better moods (Robbins, 2020).

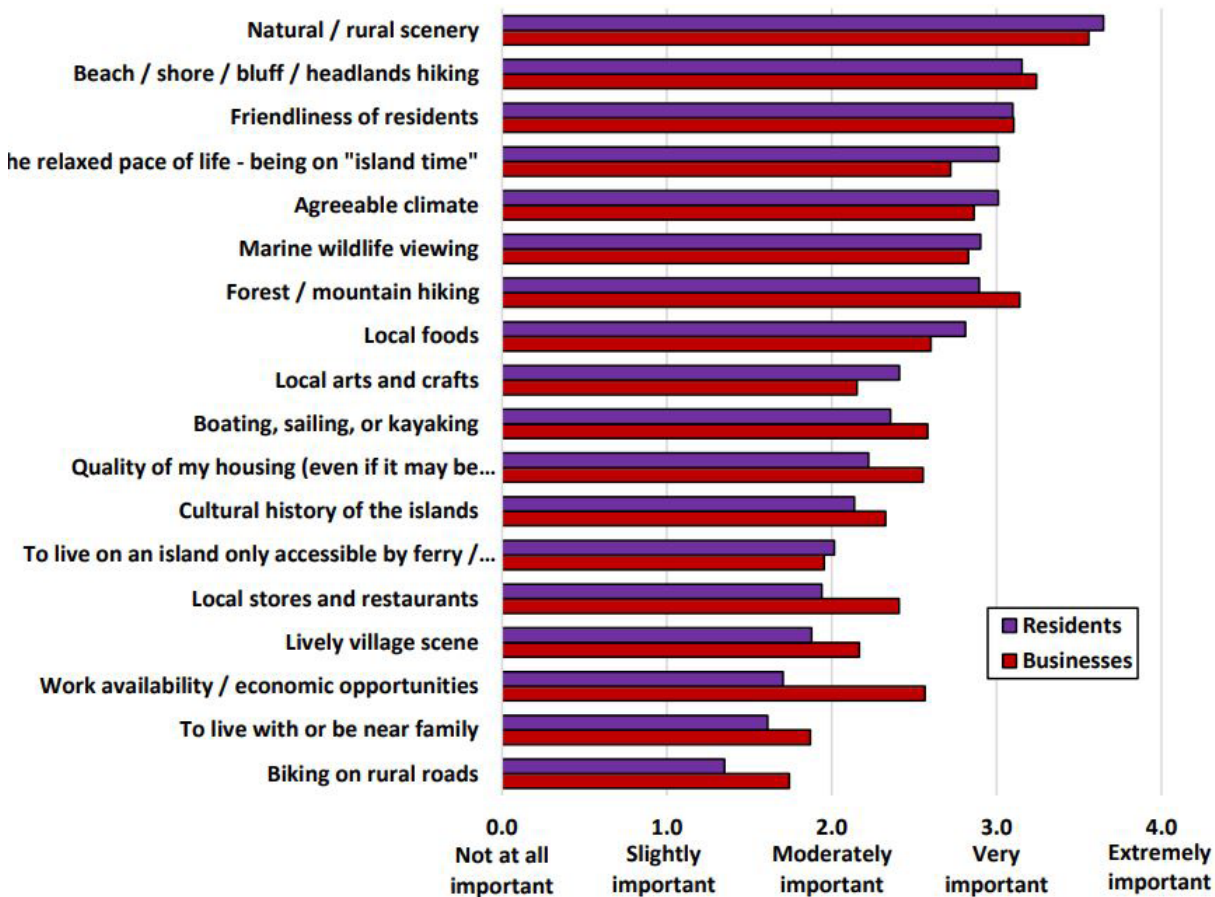


Fig. 2: Reasons for living/working in the San Juan Islands, ordered by residents' average ratings
 Source: Tourism and Visitor Management in the San Juan Islands, Confluence Research & Consulting, January 2020

Like a growing number of people across the nation, San Juan Islanders want to conserve the beauty of natural places and have access to recreational opportunities near where they live. According to the above survey conducted in 2019 for the County and interested stakeholders, island residents list local natural resources and recreational opportunities as one of the top reasons for living on San Juan Island (Fig. 2). They showed solid support for developing more off-road trails for pedestrian, bike, and equestrian use. (Fig. 1, p. 16). The survey found that people who live here recreate outdoors during the summer months considerably more often than average Americans. Almost half of adult islanders say they get outside to exercise for an hour or more 6-7 days a week during the summer, and two-thirds of islanders are getting an hour or more of outdoor exercise at least 4 times a week during these same months. These rates are dramatically higher than the national average.

These survey results suggest that many islanders would appreciate the OMRT and enjoy walking, hiking, running, or biking and trail riding along its 18-21 mile route. The eventual completion of the OMRT would open a network of trails the length of the island, from the Cattle Point lighthouse to Roche Harbor. Segments of the trail would provide a training site for competitive and recreational runners as well as local youth and school teams.



Local youth enjoy a ride on island trails
Photo: Theresa Simendinger

5 Public engagement goal

Trails and land preservation have continued to gain public support in San Juan County, as demonstrated by surveys and nonprofit and local governmental efforts. This trend is reflected by the Washington Trails Association and the ‘Rails to Trails’ momentum. Building on these accomplishments, and the ones listed below, the time is right for a modern Old Military Road Trail celebrating the beauty of San Juan Island and the heritage of the many people who have lived here.

Public engagement and project feedback: To date, the OMRT Committee has presented its vision of a cross island multi-use trail to local groups such as the Lions Club, the San Juan County Land Bank Commission, the San Juan Preservation Trust, and the San Juan Historical Society and Museum. The response to the OMRT information has been overwhelmingly positive. Questions raised about cost, the use of public funds, private property concerns, and tourism, will be addressed as part of the OMRT Committee’s ongoing planning and engagement process.

Due to the pandemic, many events have been delayed but socially distanced in-person meetings have continued. The Committee has outlined a Communication Plan and begun work on a video. Members have published three Seasonal Trail Times articles that reference the Old Military Road Trail. The team has also published articles referring to the OMRT on Facebook, The Journal, San Juan Islander and The San Juan Update. As we incorporate feedback, the Concept Proposal will be refined and posted on the OMRT website along with other relevant documents with links for easy reference at <https://www.oldmilitaryroadtrail.org>.



Families enjoy hike at American Camp, San Juan Island National Historic Park
Photo: Todd Kaden

Timeline of important benchmarks in land preservation and trail development in San Juan County:

1966 - San Juan Island National Historical Park established

1979 - Founding of San Juan Preservation Trust

1990 - Vote by San Juan County citizens to create San Juan County Land Bank

1999 - San Juan Island Trails Committee created by the San Juan Island Park & Recreation Commissioners

2002 - Attendance of 100 local residents for a conference in Friday Harbor about trails in San Juan County

2006 - San Juan Island Trails Plan

2009 - Beginning of Lopez Community Trails Network

2010 - Addition of Mitchell Hill to the San Juan Island National Historic Park for multipurpose use by hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians

2016 - Opening of Mt Grant Preserve trail

2016 - Roche Harbor Resort honored for creating a National Recreation Trail for its extensive system of public trails on private land.

2017 - Adoption of a Complete Streets ordinance by the Town of Friday Harbor, requiring future road improvement projects to consider all users of the right-of-way

2018 - Adoption of Complete Streets ordinance by San Juan County Council

2020 - Opening of Zylstra Lake loop trail



A family enjoying the safety of an off-road trail as envisioned for the OMRT
Photo: Todd Kaden

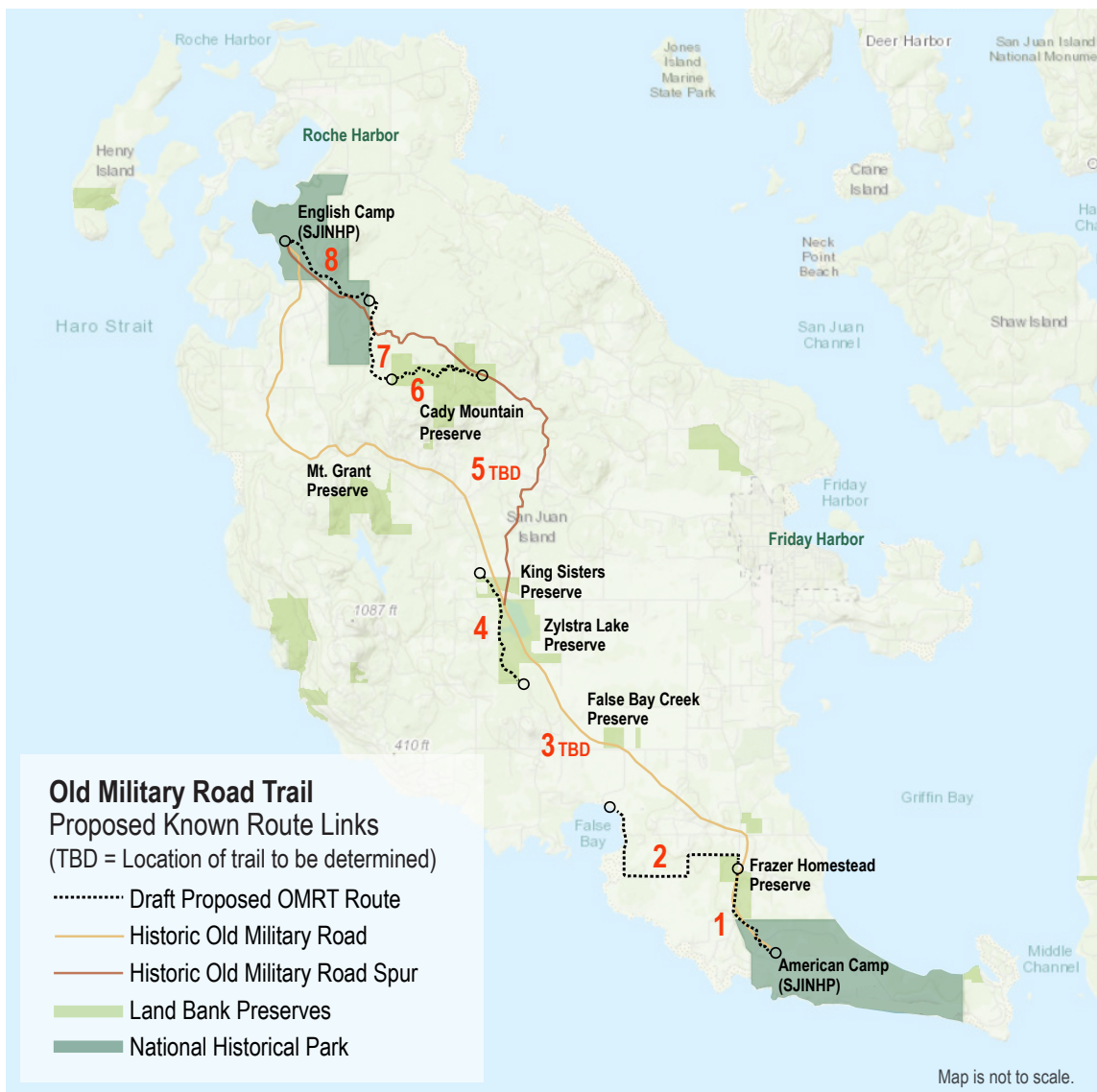
The proposed Old Military Road Trail route traverses San Juan Island from the southeast to the northwest, connecting the American and English Camp units of the San Juan Island National Historical Park and celebrates early local history along the first major road on the island.

Proposed Route Location

Where possible, the trail route would intersect or follow the original 1850s route and associated spur roads. In many places, it would deviate from the historic routes to skirt physical land features, avoid building improvements, and bypass sensitive areas. It would travel through multiple distinct zones including meadows, open rocky outcrops, woodlands, along freshwater lakes, oak prairies, and saltwater shoreline. The route would use mostly publicly accessible trails on county or conservation lands. It is these public lands now open for low-impact recreation that would anchor this modern trail. The trail would cross private land

on occasion but only with permission from—and in coordination with—the landowner. The trail would also utilize county road rights-of-way in places where other options are unavailable.

The trail would be opened in phases with eight distinct segments as noted below. Segment 1 would run concurrent with the American Camp Trail and is targeted for completion in 2022, to coincide with the 150th anniversary of Kaiser Wilhelm I's arbitration decision granting the San Juan Islands to the United States. The opening of additional segments would follow.



Segment One

American Camp Visitor Center to Frazer Homestead

Segment One would start at the new American Camp Visitor Center. It would follow the existing American Camp Trail for 1.5 miles through woodland and meadows. After leaving the Park, it would parallel the Frazer Homestead Preserve, site of an early settlement and current host to a local livestock ranching operation. This section of the trail would represent one of the most historically accurate portions of the route, mirroring closely the historic “Cowichan Road” sheep run and later much improved Military Road during joint occupation. It would pass two late 19th century farmhouses and provide striking views of Mt. Baker. At present, segment one is largely complete as a hiking trail (see Spring Trail Times on oldmilitarytrail.org for more information on this section). Road and mountain bicyclists would use the newly widened shoulder of Cattle Point Road to travel this initial segment. The starting location would serve as a primary trailhead with parking, restrooms, potable water, outdoor seating, and interpretive information.

Segment Two

Frazer Homestead to False Bay

Segment Two would begin at or near the Frazer Homestead Preserve and travel west along False Bay Drive to the head of False Bay. Here, the road widens to accommodate limited parking at this minor trailhead. This section of the trail would be approximately 2.5 miles in length. It would afford inspiring vistas of the Olympic Mountain range as well as pastoral scenes, including restored barns from the mid-1800s. The terminus of this segment would allow shoreline access at False Bay estuary, providing exceptional opportunities for shoreline exploration at low tide. This multi-use section would accommodate hiking and biking on or near this lightly traveled rural road, and may offer ADA access.



Segment Three

False Bay to Zylstra Lake Preserve

The exact route of Segment Three, which will eventually connect the parking area at False Bay with the Land Bank’s Zylstra Lake Preserve, is unknown at this time. It may follow False Bay Drive north along a University of Washington biological preserve and adjacent agricultural lands to its intersection with Bailer Hill Road. This portion of the segment would pass the picturesque False Bay Farm and parallel False Bay Creek—the primary drainage basin and largest watercourse on San Juan Island. This piece of the segment would accommodate hiking and biking on the road surface. The balance of segment three is undefined and would connect to Zylstra Lake Preserve or King Sisters Preserve. A direct route would be approximately three miles in length and follow road rights-of-way and private property by owner permission.

Segment Four

Zylstra Lake Preserve to King Sisters Preserve

Segment Four would utilize trails on both Zylstra Lake and King Sisters Preserves (see Fall Trail Times Zylstra Lake article on oldmilitaryroadtrail.org). The San Juan County Land Bank leases portions of both preserves to local farmers, ensuring their continued agricultural use. A portion of this segment may follow farm service roads, but additional sections of trail would require development consistent with the Preserve’s management plan. The trail depiction noted below is for illustrative purposes only; the route may differ but would likely extend for 1.5-2 miles. Regardless of the exact track, this section of the trail would pass near the site of the historic 1850s era Military Road and associated spur as well as numerous early settler farms. The northern end of this segment may also include a minor trailhead with limited parking. Other trail amenities would be offered consistent with the Zylstra Lake Preserve management plan.



Segment Five

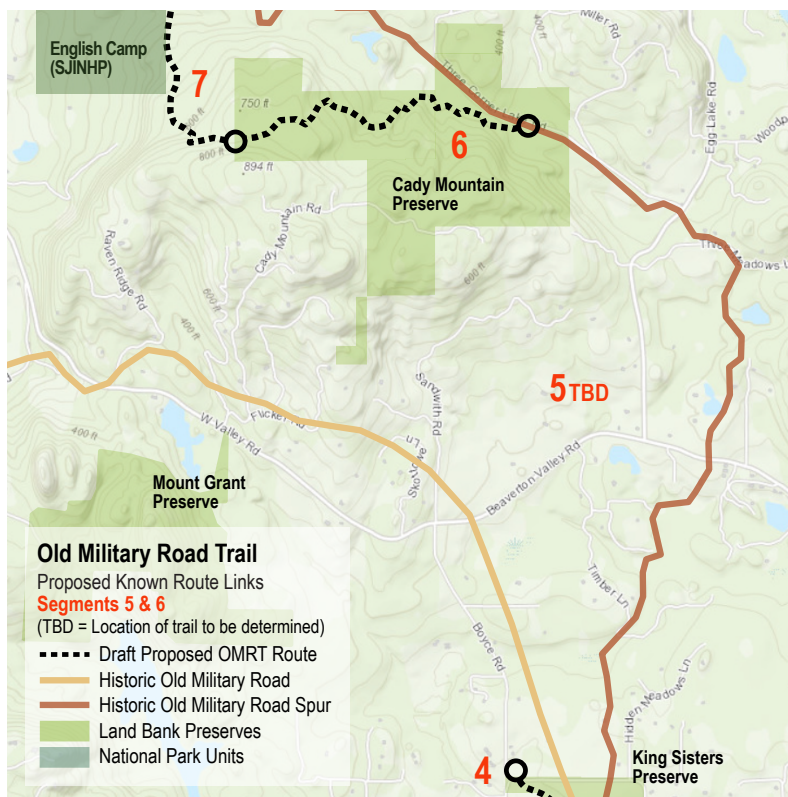
King Sisters Preserve to Cady Mountain Preserve

Segment Five would connect the King Sisters Preserve to the Cady Mountain Preserve Lester Addition which is bisected by Three Corner Lake Road. This segment would be 4-6 miles in length and is undefined at this time. It may be accommodated on county road rights-of-way and/or over larger parcels of privately held land by owner permission.

Segment Six

Cady Mountain Preserve to Roche Harbor Highlands

Segment Six would traverse the Land Bank's Cady Mountain Preserve along the eastern flank of Cady Mountain. This several mile section is heavily wooded and offers topographically challenging terrain passing through century-old stands of Douglas fir, western hemlock, and western red cedar. The exact trail location would be determined by the San Juan County Conservation Land Bank, so the route noted on the adjacent map is for illustrative purposes only. There may be a public access point with a small parking area along Three Corner Lake Road, where the proposed Old Military Road Trail would intersect with the Historic Old Military Road Spur. This segment would support recreational use consistent with the Preserve management plan.



Segment Seven

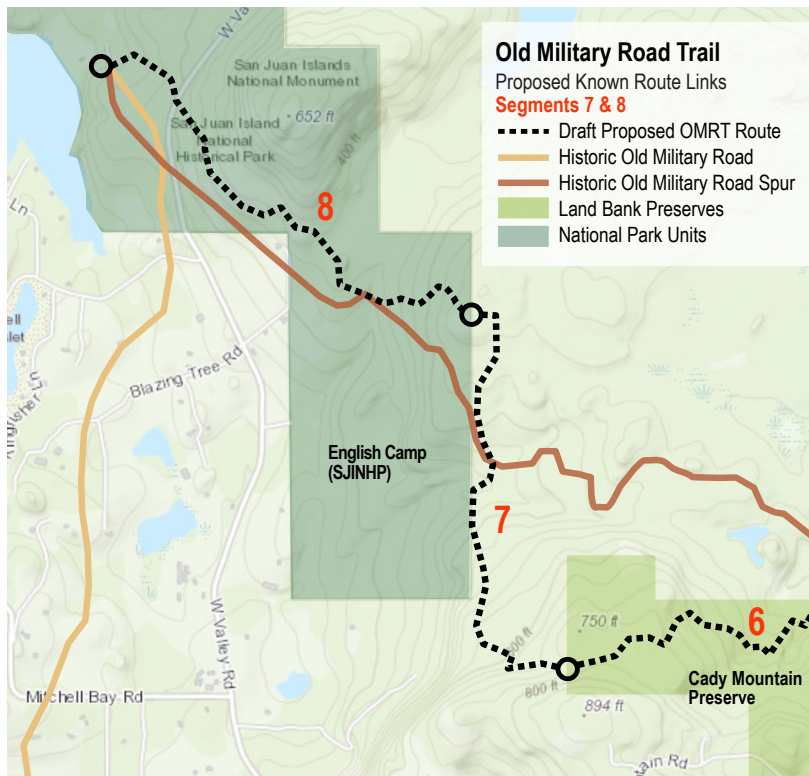
Roche Harbor Highlands to Mitchell Hill

Segment Seven would utilize an existing trail and primitive road on the privately-owned Roche Harbor Highlands property, with the permission and cooperation of the landowners. Roche Harbor Highlands is a 1,300-acre parcel on the east side of the National Historical Park - English Camp Unit. This forest reserve land serves as the watershed for the Roche Harbor Community and supports informal, public access for trail running, mountain biking, hiking, and horseback riding. The trail would descend the northwestern side of Cady Mountain and then follow a primitive road north, just east of the English Camp boundary of the NHP. A short distance of the trail would coincide with the route of the Historic Old Military Road Spur.

Segment Eight

Mitchell Hill to Garrison Bay

Segment Eight would utilize land within the San Juan Island National Historical Park - English Camp Unit. The trail would enter the NHP in the vicinity of Mitchell Hill, and proceed downhill for up to two miles before reaching the parade ground on Garrison Bay. The NHP has an extensive trail network in the Mitchell Hill area that is used by hikers, mountain bikers, trail runners, and equestrian enthusiasts. The proposed trail would parallel and cross the Historic Military Road Spur for most of this segment. Very large old growth firs dot the steep landscape in the thick forests along the west side of Mitchell Hill, before the terrain opens up into a large Garry oak meadow at the west-facing base of Young Hill. Parking, vault toilets, potable water, and interpretive information would be available at the National Park hosted English Camp trailhead.



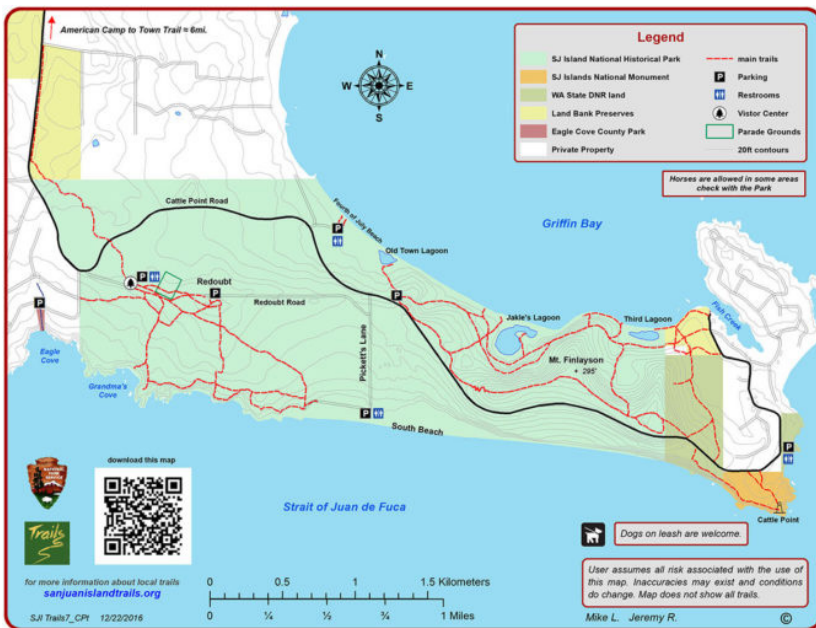
Connections

The Old Military Road Trail would connect several distinct trail systems on San Juan Island. In the south, it links to the American Camp upland and shoreline network, including popular treks to South Beach, Mt Finlayson, Grandma’s Cove, Jakles Lagoon, and 4th of July Beach. Beyond the Park boundary, paths meander to the grounds of Cattle Point Lighthouse, managed by the Bureau of Land Management, as well as the Cattle Point Natural Resources Conservation Area, under the management of the Washington State Department of Natural Resources. Another short hike leads to secluded Eagle Cove, one of the most popular sandy beaches on the island.

Additionally, the initial segment of the OMRT would join the American Camp Trail which, in turn, connects to the Town of Friday Harbor. This connection was made possible by the generous support and ongoing cooperation of several private landowners, the San Juan County Land Bank, members of a homeowner’s association, and the National Park Service. From Friday Harbor, users can continue to

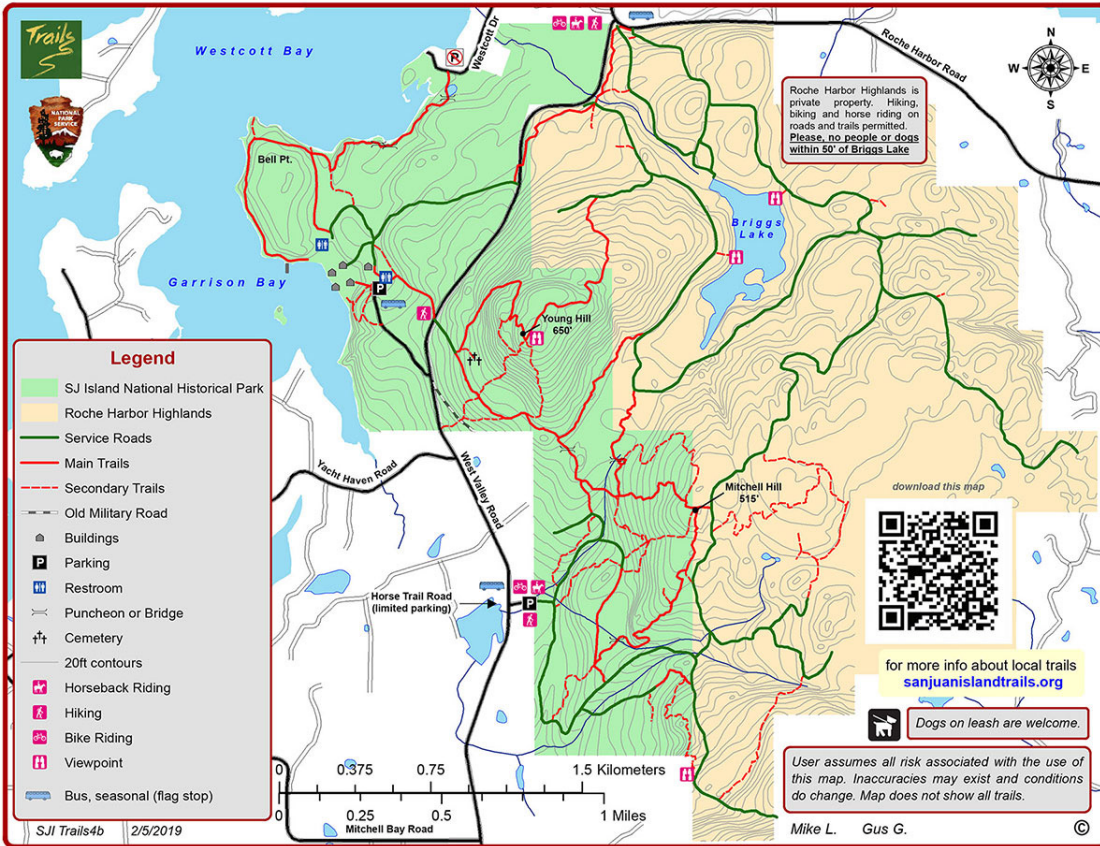
Jackson Beach, the Linde Park Trail (ADA accessible) and the planned upland trails of Beaverton Marsh Preserve.

In the north, the OMRT would tie into the privately-owned Roche Harbor Highlands as well as the National Park Service Mitchell Hill Addition. Other English Camp trails within the Historical Park include Bell Point, Young Hill, and Westcott Bay. In turn, a connector trail leads further north to the popular Roche Harbor Trails. This popular collection of tracks on resort land is maintained by local resident volunteers and is open for public access. In summary, the Old Military Road Trail—through a multi-agency, public-private partnership—would serve as the backbone of this island-wide, non-motorized network uniting major attractions, residential communities, and nearly fifty miles of San Juan Island trails.

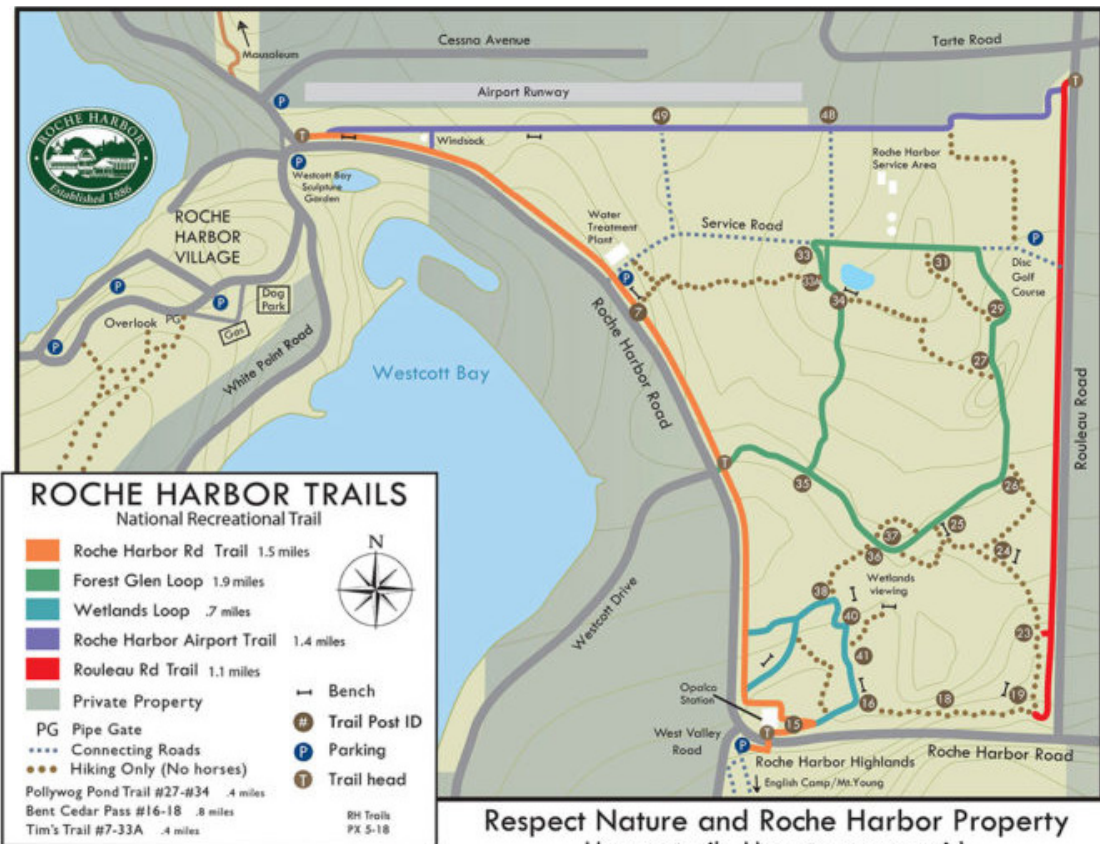


American Camp & Cattle Point Trails





English Camp, Mitchell Hill, & Roche Harbor Highlands Trails



Trail Guidelines



Multi-use section of the Old Military Road Trail
Photo: Todd Kaden



Hikers along proposed OMRT at Frazer Homestead Preserve; note vegetative and fencing barriers
Photo: Robin Donnelly



Zylstra Lake
Photo: Craig Canine

Design & Materials

Each segment of the Old Military Road Trail would be designed for the types of recreational uses permitted. Terrain, trail width, topography, surface material, native flora, and associated amenities will vary. Some segments would be primitive, single-track, dirt paths for hikers only. Other sections would be more developed, with up to fifteen feet wide of compacted, crushed rock base. These sections would support multiple user types. Connector trails would be located within county road rights-of-way, either along or separated from the road surface by a vegetative barrier. In certain locations, hikers, bikers, trail runners, and horseback riders may follow separate routes. Regardless of the location, each section would be carefully adapted to the natural landscape. When necessary, noxious weed removal, native habitat restoration, and wetland protective techniques would be employed to mitigate disturbances to environmentally sensitive areas.

Access

The trail would be accessible at several locations along the route, with full-service trailheads at English Camp and the American Camp Visitor Center. Automobile and bicycle parking, restrooms, potable water, interpretive information, picnic tables, trail map signboards, garbage receptacles, and other Park information would be available at these locations. Minor trailhead access points would be located at False Bay, Zylstra Lake Preserve/King Sisters Preserve, the Cady Mountain Preserve Addition along Three Corner Lake Road and potentially other locations. These secondary access points would offer few amenities but afford auto parking.

Interpretive Themes and Displays

Interpretive signage with QR codes and/or other links to digital media along the route would offer a variety of cultural and natural resource information to stimulate the trail users' interest and spark their imagination. Highlighted themes may include native flora, fauna, agriculture, historic preservation, Coast Salish tribes and European settlement, conservation, peaceful dispute resolution, and scenic landscapes.

Informational & Wayfinding Signage

Outdoor informational kiosks would be present at both American and English Camp trailheads and other select locations along the route. Discreet, strategically located maps and trail mileage markers along the route would inform and orient users. Way-finding signage would be minimized so as not to distract from the natural setting.

Guidelines for Use

The Old Military Road Trail would accommodate a variety of users on various sections. The entire trail would be open for hiking and trail running. In select locations, bikers would share the path with runners and hikers. In other sections, bikers would have separate, designated routes. Horseback riding would be permitted in select places consistent with the policies of the host jurisdiction. Portions of the trail may be ADA accessible if it is topographically possible and financially feasible.



Sheep have been a part of San Juan Island agriculture since the mid-1800s

Photo: Todd Kaden



Signage at Zylstra Lake Preserve

Photo: Todd Kaden



Combination of interpretive and informational signage at English Camp

The following **general guidelines** apply to all sectors of the trail and would serve to promote a safe, enjoyable experience for all users:

- Trail accessible from dawn to dusk
- Be respectful of area wildlife and different recreational users
- Trail open for hiking and trail running
- Biking and equestrian use in designated areas
- Pack out your trash
- Be respectful of private property
- Stay on designated paths
- Use caution at county road crossings
- Discharge of firearms and fireworks prohibited
- Leashed pets allowed in designated locations
- Owners responsible for collecting and disposing of pet waste
- Motorized vehicles prohibited
- Leave no trace



Maintenance

The Old Military Road Trail would require seasonal as well as routine maintenance. Best practice construction methods could minimize this requirement, but a certain amount of regular monitoring and upkeep is inevitable. This would include vegetation control, monitoring and repair of fencing, removal of downed trees and limbs, repair of trail signage, trash pickup and monitoring of other trail amenities and infrastructure. Environmentally sensitive locations and areas prone to flooding may need special attention.

The managing host jurisdictions—in concert with volunteer trail monitors—would constitute an ongoing partnership to oversee this function. Annual events would be organized around “Earth Day” and “National Trails Day” for removal of litter. An “Adopt-A-Trail” program could be instituted in which certain groups, organizations, and/or individuals will assume responsibility for maintaining a section of the trail. Youth conservation, scout and service organizations, as well as local high school students completing community service projects, could also be enlisted to service the trail. A growing group of dedicated resident volunteers would constitute the third pillar of support for trail upkeep. Through this cooperative effort, the Old Military Road Trail would be maintained in perpetuity.

Finally, ongoing maintenance would require financing. Grants, local fundraising, and other philanthropic sources may be necessary. Signage along the trail outside of the Historical Park boundaries would include information about how users could donate their time and money to help defray trail maintenance costs.

Conclusion

The trail proper would have a very small footprint, but its impact would be powerful and profound. Whether exploring on foot, bike or horseback, the Old Military Road Trail would become an adventure through nature and history creating lasting memories, respect for nature and an enduring connection to place. The OMRT would be a legacy gift for current and future generations.



False Bay

Photo: Todd Kaden

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Hikers enjoy part of the Old Military Road near English Camp

Photo: Shaun Hubbard



Hikers and a horseback rider beginning a "Know Your Island Walk" at Mitchell Hill Trailhead



Cyclist at False Bay Biological Preserve

Photo: Robin Donnelly

Old Military Road Trail Committee

Join us to create this distinctive trail for generations to enjoy!

www.oldmilitaryroadtrail.org

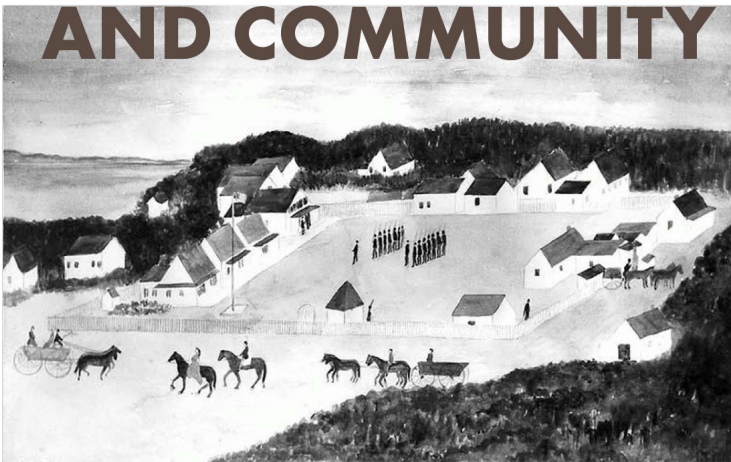


Robin Donnelly, Tim Dustrude, Jeffrey Gillette, Shaun Hubbard, Todd Kaden, Jim McNairy, Boyd Pratt, Mike Vouri, Dave Zeretzke, Mark Noyes





CELEBRATE PEACEFUL CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND COMMUNITY



The Old Military Road was instrumental in the peaceful resolution of the boundary dispute known as the Pig War. Its re-creation in a multivariied backbone trail connecting many of the public lands already in existence celebrates this continuing spirit of cooperation.

To make this vision of an Old Military Road Trail become a reality, it will take a grand alliance of public and private entities and people like you