

The Great Observatory Mesa Area Trail Plan and Public Outreach Commencement

Open Space Specialist, Robert Wallace



General Overview



- What location the plan address
- Why the plan was created
- How the plan was created and how it addresses preservation and recreation
- What the plan proposes
- Next steps
- Opportunity to provide feedback


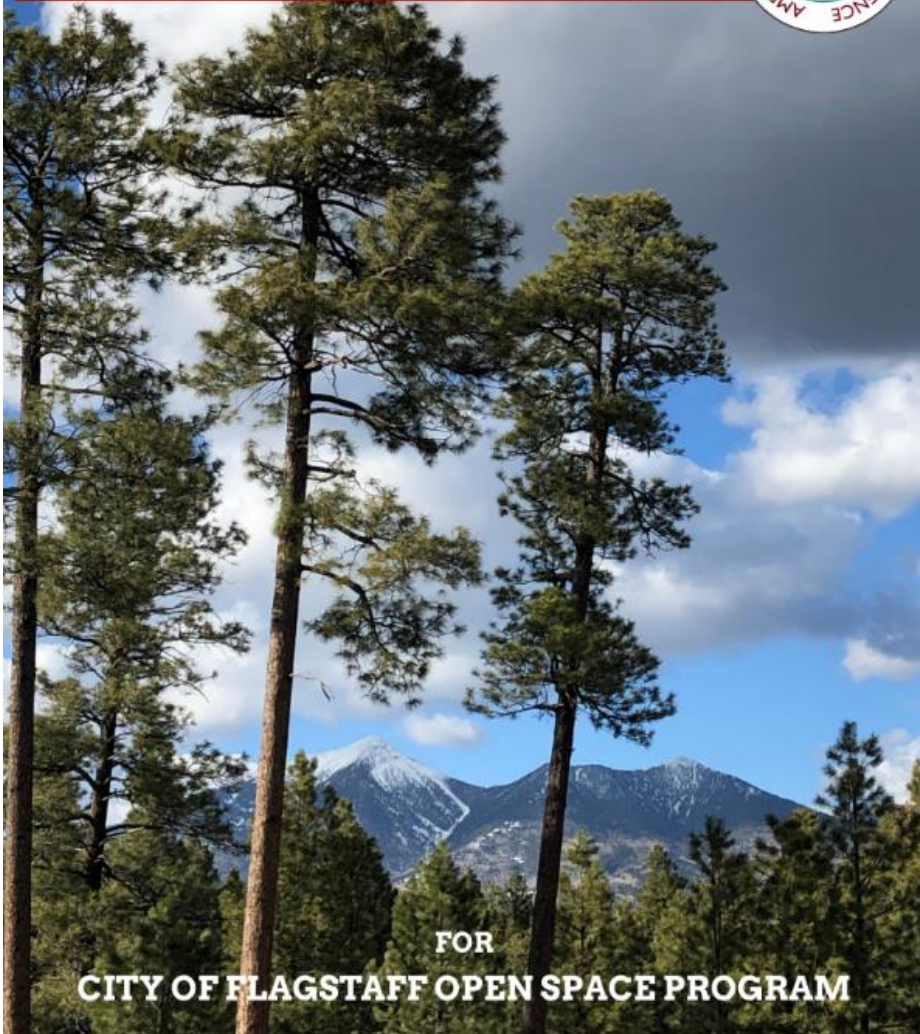




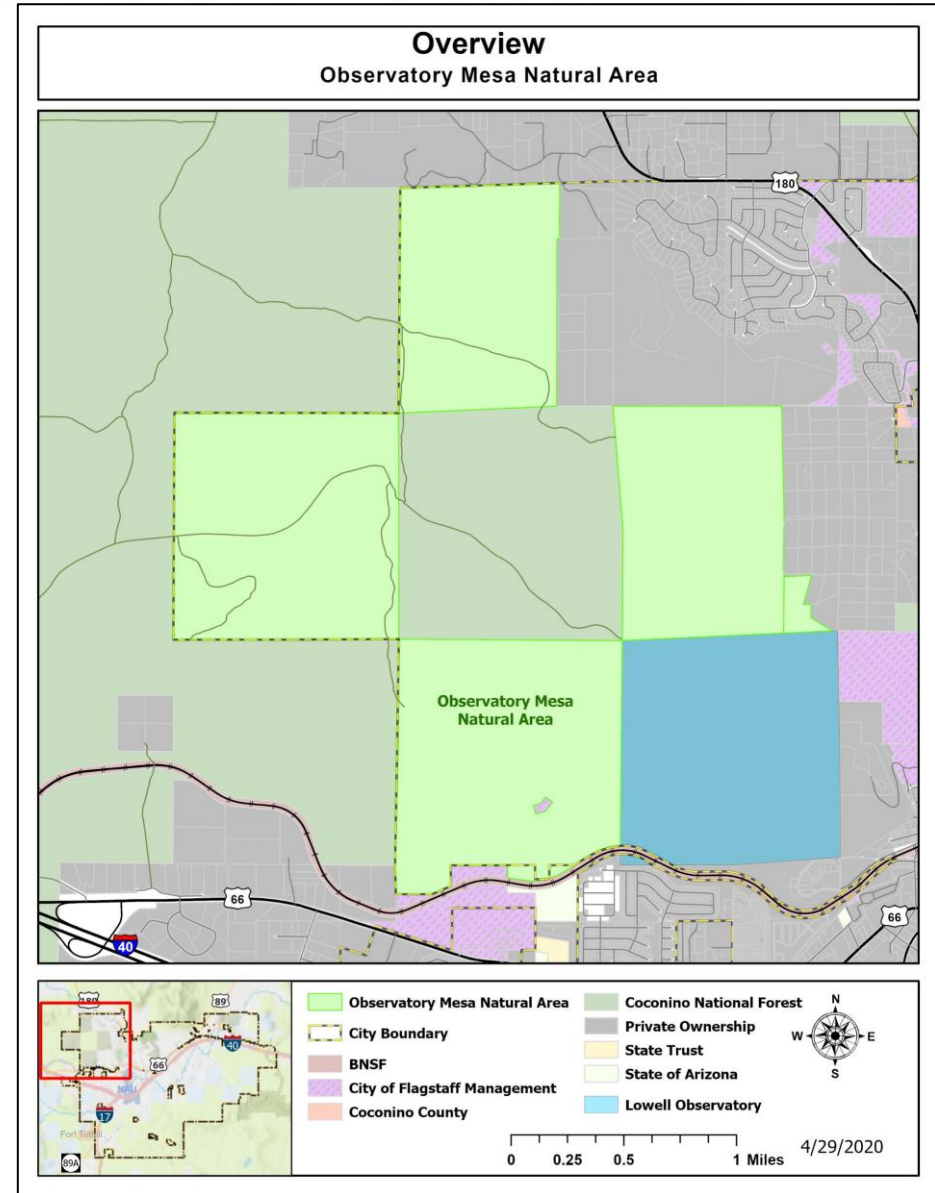
Trail Plan Draft Generalities



GREATER OBSERVATORY MESA TRAIL PLAN
2022
 Prepared by Mark Loeth, National Trails Specialist, American Conservation Experience

FOR
CITY OF FLAGSTAFF OPEN SPACE PROGRAM





Background: Plan Draft Development



Background:

- 2004 bond fund
- Arizona State Parks Growing Smarter grant and Conservation Easement
 - Conservation easement language: the right to engage in and permit engagement in recreational uses of the property, including hiking, trail running, cycling, equestrian use, and other forms of passive recreation, and educational and scientific study activities.





Background: Plan Draft Development

Flagstaff Trail Initiative public survey (<http://flagstafftrailsinitiative.org/>)

- 1,700 public comments received
- 7% of the comments were about Observatory Mesa, distilled into the following five recommendations.

1. Construct a new stacked loop system
2. Connect Fort Valley and Observatory Mesa
3. Adopt unauthorized trails on Lowell Observatory property as part of trail system
4. Evaluate unauthorized trails for closure and naturalization
5. Connect Fort Valley to FUTS with a commuter route



Background: Plan Development Partners



- Observatory Mesa Natural Area
- Lowell Observatory
- Coconino National Forest

Greater Observatory Mesa Partners:





Current Conditions

- 20-30,000 users/year
- Broad array of recreation
 - hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing
- Only 5.8 miles of formal trail
- Minimal access
- Un-managed recreation and public use, including 15 miles of user-created unauthorized trails



illegally constructed trails

Draft Plan Objectives

1. Identification and incorporation of strategies that will benefit the preservation of the area and wildlife habitat
2. Propose a trail system design for implementation for the Greater Observatory Mesa Natural Area





Strategies for Preservation

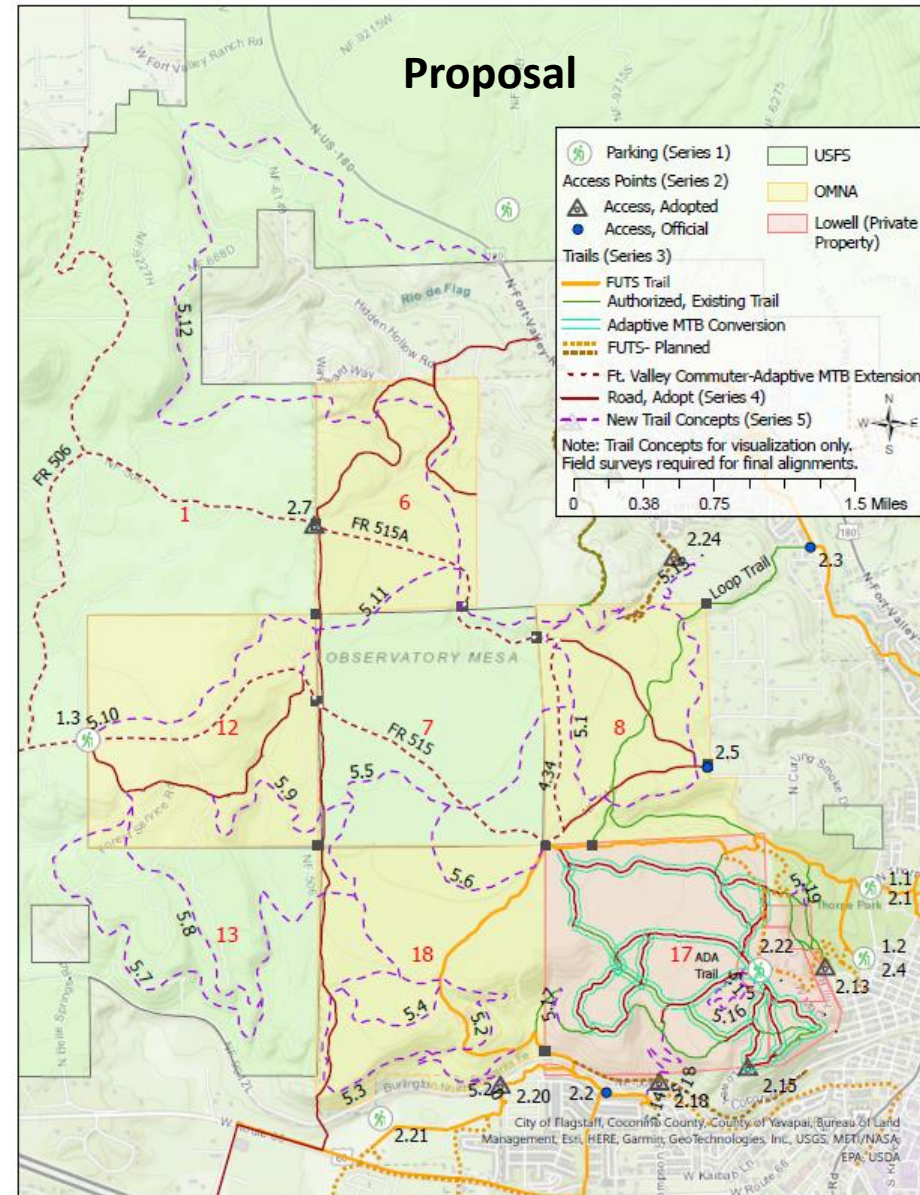
- Sustainable alignments
- Restoration
- Passive recreation
- Avoidance of ecologically sensitive areas



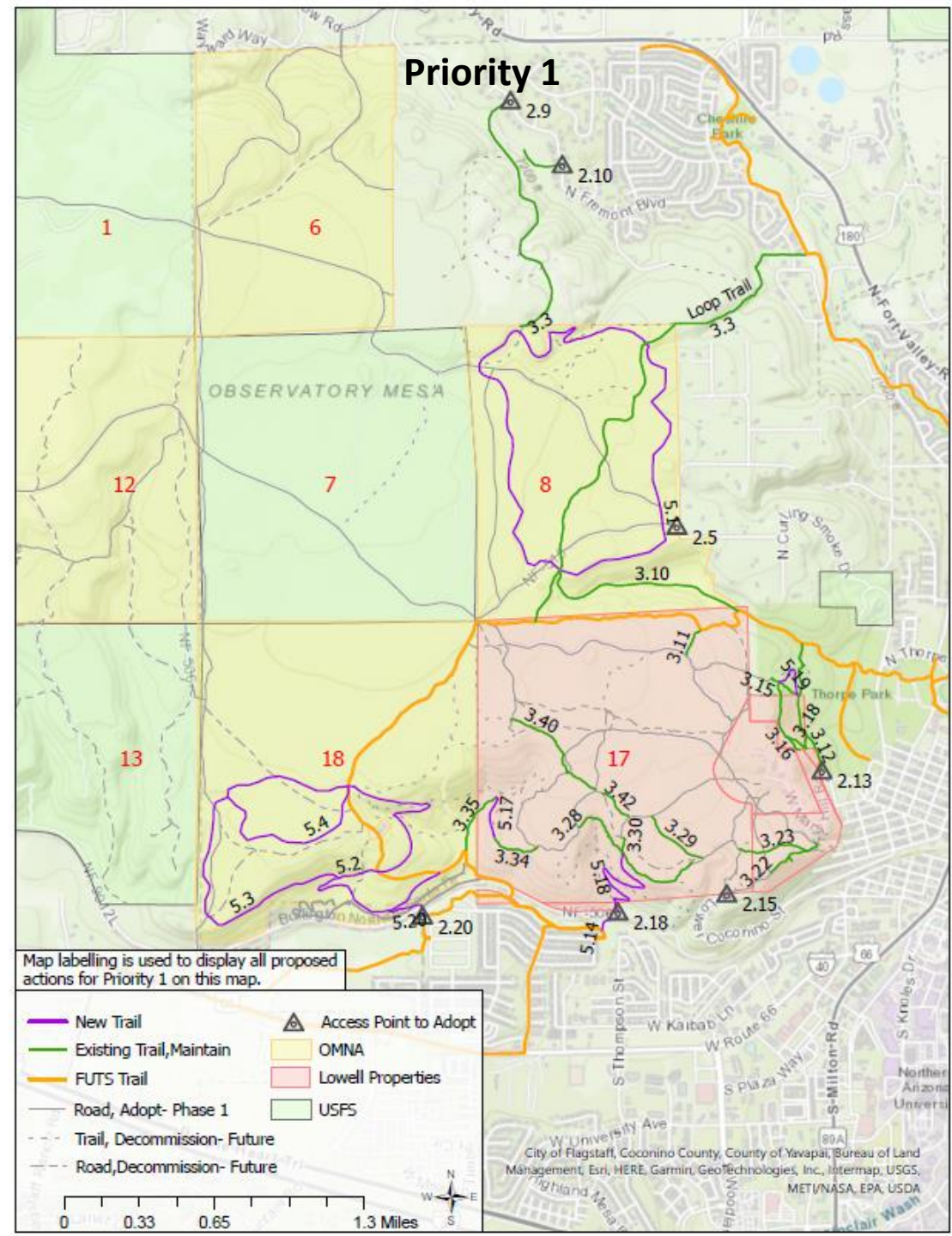


Trail System Design

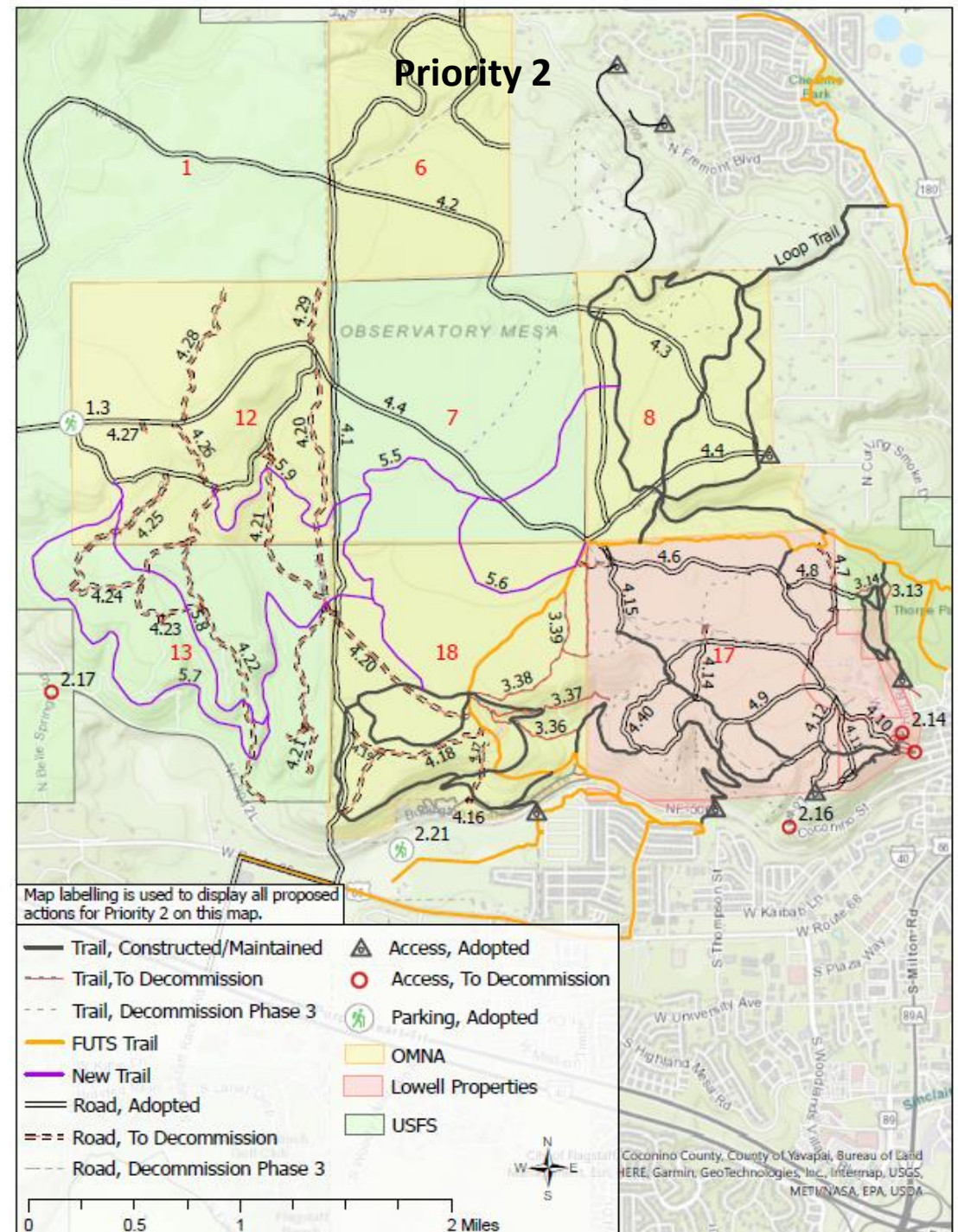
- Existing trail repairs
- Unauthorized trail restoration
- Abandoned road restoration
- 12 formal access points
- 26 miles of single track trail
- ADA trail implementation
- Adaptive mountain biking trail
- Trail signage
- Additional parking
- Two educational zones



Draft Plan: Priority 1



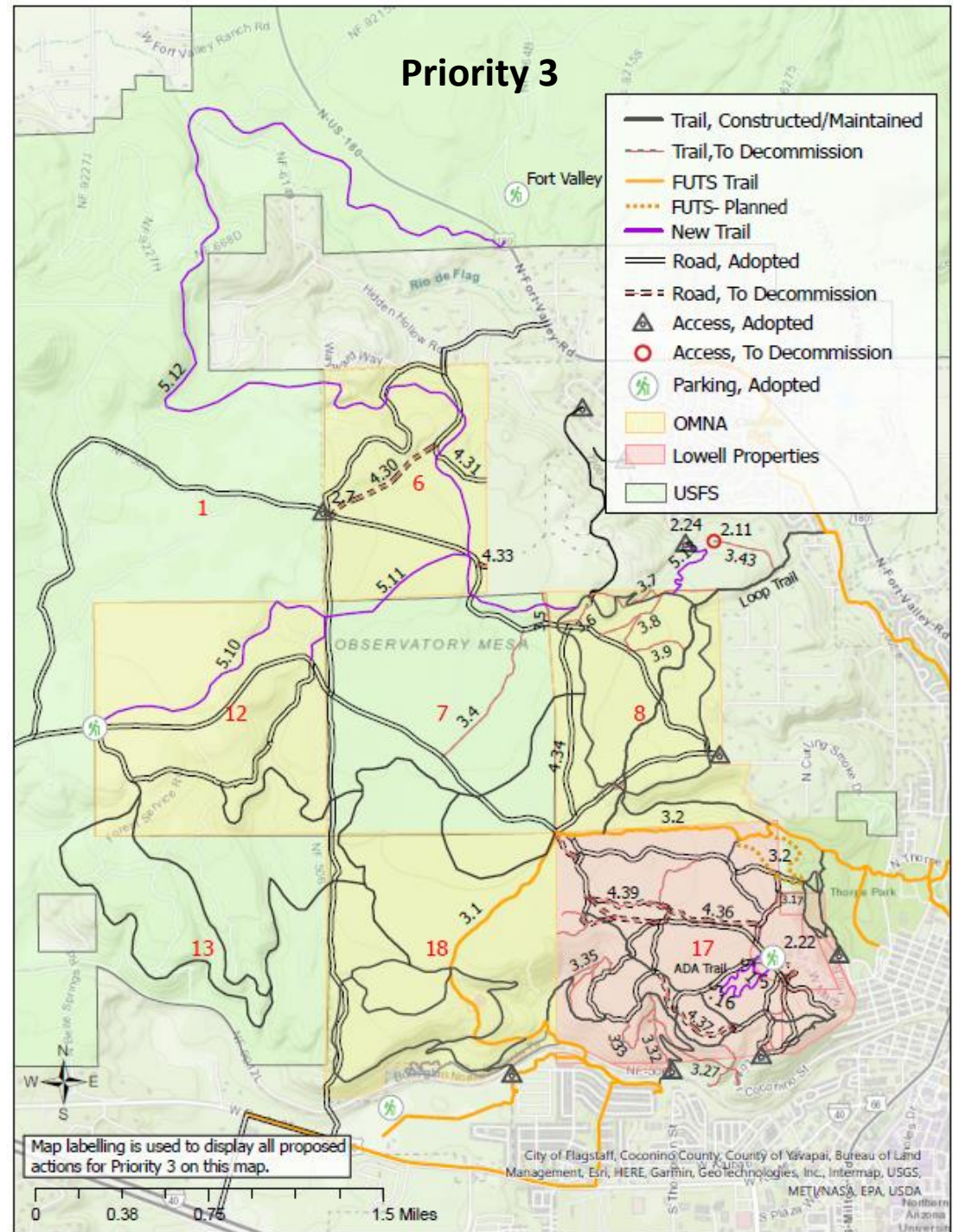
Draft Plan: Priority 2



Draft Plan: Priority 3

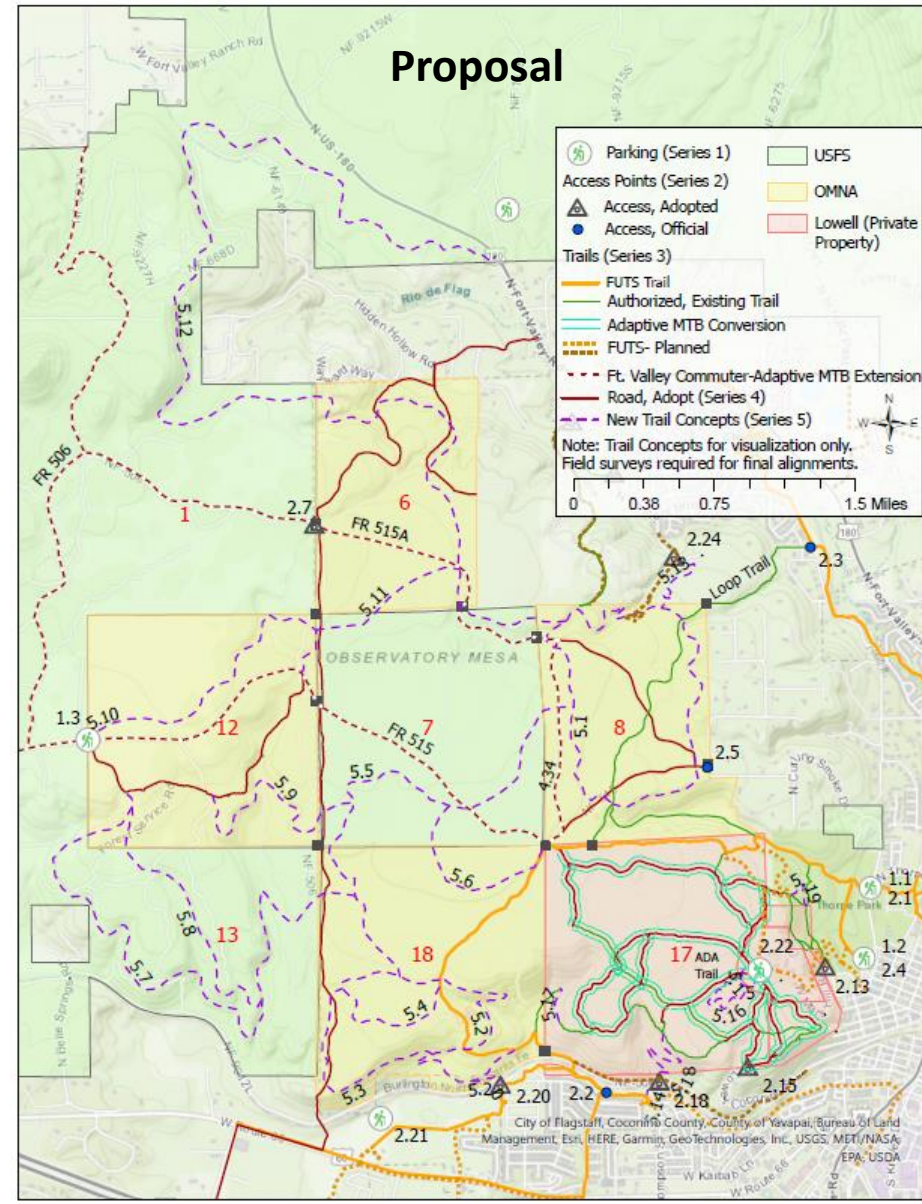
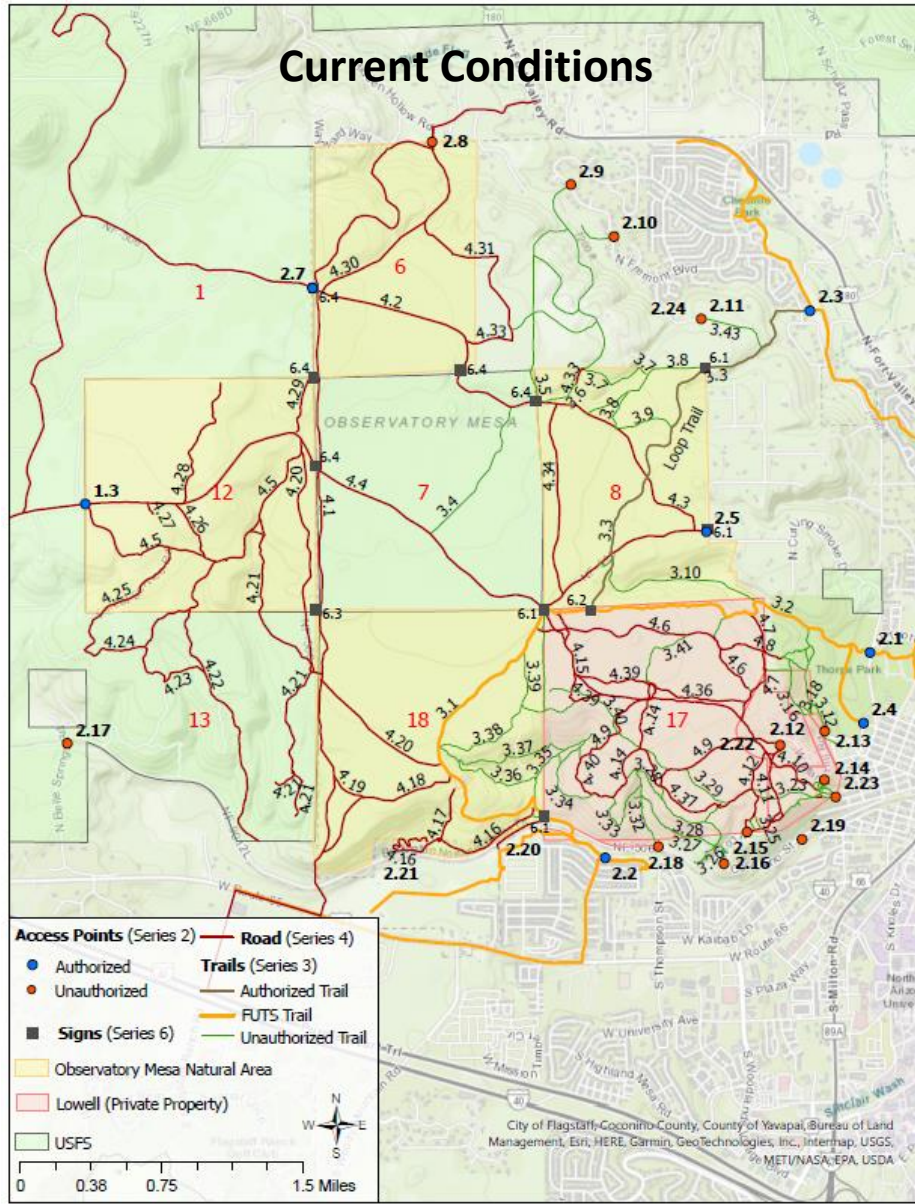


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Draft Plan: Overall Proposed Actions





Next Steps – Stakeholder Review & Input

Partners to Review

- Lowell Observatory
- Coconino National Forest
- Flagstaff Trails Initiative
- City of Flagstaff Park and Recreation
- City of Flagstaff Property & Development
- City of Flagstaff Fire Department
- Flagstaff Urban Trail System (FUTS)
- Arizona State Parks
- State Historic Preservation Office
- Arizona Game and Fish Department
- Draft to City Council
- City of Flagstaff Commissions/Committees/Boards:
 - Commission on Inclusion and Adaptive Living
 - Heritage Preservation Commission
 - Housing Commission
 - Indigenous Commission
 - Open Spaces Commission
 - Parks and Recreation Commission
 - Planning and Zoning Commission
 - Sustainability Commission
 - Tourism Commission
 - Transportation Commission
- Flagstaff's Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB)
- Coconino County Parks, Recreation and Open Space



Next Steps – Planning & Participation Timeline

2020-2022

Summer 2022

Fall 22

Fall 22

Winter 22

Winter 23

Spring 23

**Trail Plan
Drafting
with
Partners**

**Public
Comment
Stage 1**

**June 14
–
July 23**

**Public
Comment
Stage 2**

**August 8
–
September 9**

**Permitting,
Agreements,
& Surveys**

**SHPO
Submission**

**Finalized
Proposal
Review**

**January 9
–
February 7**

**Plan
Adoption**

Summary



- Moving Forward
 - Create a final plan
 - Resource protection
 - Abide by guiding documents
 - Propose actions for facility development., restoration, signage, and education zones
 - Upon plan approval, pursue funding for implementation



Thank you

Robert Wallace

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Questions, comments, ideas?

Public Comment Period #1: June 14, 2022 – July 23, 2022

- **In-person Public Meeting, 6/29/2022. City Hall, Council Chambers, 211 West Aspen Ave. Flagstaff**
- **Time: Wednesday, 5-7 pm, 2 hours.**
 - **Virtual option: Microsoft Teams**
- **Community Forum Comment Period #1, 6/14/2022 - 7/23/2022**
 - **<https://www.flagstaffaz.gov/3284/Flagstaff-Community-Forum>**