

Progress & Timeline



The development of Great Shasta Rail Trail is the result of collaboration and cooperation among many organizations and individuals. The Core Team that guided trail development from 2009 through 2013 was a informal coalition of five organizations. Core Team members shared the work and gained support for the project. Their accomplishments were due to the beautiful idea of an 80 mile rail trail and their success in collaborating. Planning Team members volunteered many hours of time and their expertise, assuring that the core of this plan would be ready when needed.

2005 – 2008: A Project is Born

The story of the development of the Great Shasta Rail Trail began in Burney when a member of the Board of Directors of Save Burney Falls (a local nonprofit) became aware that the owner of the McCloud Railroad had filed paperwork requesting permission for abandonment of four sections of the railroad right of way, including the corridor between Burney and McCloud. The railroad's June 27, 2005 filing was with the Surface Transportation Board (STB), a federal regulatory agency that oversees U.S. railroad rate and service disputes. Tasked with reviewing proposed railroad abandonment's, the STB retains jurisdiction over these rights of way until it approves final abandonment of any such corridor. These actions set in motion the eventual removal of the rails and ties between Pilgrim Creek Road (just outside of McCloud) and Burney. It also set the stage for the eventual designation of Shasta Land Trust as the "Interim Trail User" and purchaser of the entire corridor.

Save Burney Falls effectively halted the abandonment process when it submitted a "trail use request" to the STB in November 2005 and started negotiations with the railroad owner for the purchase of the eight mile portion of the rail line that could take hikers and bicyclists from Burney to the McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial State Park. Save Burney Falls, while negotiating for the purchase of the property, worked to obtain community support for the proposed trail, an effort that was supported by the Shasta County Health Department, the Burney Chamber of Commerce, and a large number of individual contributors.

The railroad owner, however, was not interested in selling only eight miles of an 80 mile corridor. Owners of adjacent property declined to enter into negotiations to sell their (future) interests and the project was stymied.

2009: Core Team Forms

A gathering of representatives of organizations from throughout northeastern California interested in developing a rail trail between Burney and McCloud included the Executive Director of the Lassen Trails and Trust, who had rail to trail project development experience. He suggested to



the group that they use the tool of “rail banking” to acquire the entire corridor between McCloud and Burney. The group of organizations that became the “Core Team” supported combining the proposals of Save Burney Falls (trail to the Park) and McCloud Local First Network (trail from McCloud to the SBF trail) and began work on the project that would become the Great Shasta Rail Trail.

Core Team members, who were representatives of Shasta Land Trust, Save Burney Falls, Volcanic Legacy Community Partnership, and McCloud Local First Network, set to work developing strategies for purchase negotiation and dealing with rail banking, grant applications, and garnering community support for the project.

2010: Letter of Intent to Sell is Signed and National Park Service Commits Assistance

The Core Team began negotiating with the railroad owner to determine the details of a purchase by Shasta Land Trust of the railroad property. The railroad signed a “letter of intent” to sell and the Core Team began fund-raising, grant writing and extensive planning related to converting a railroad corridor into a public recreation trail. A grant from the McConnell Fund of the Shasta Regional Community Foundation made possible the crucial “due diligence” efforts to prepare for the purchase of the 80 mile property. The title search was more complex than originally imagined, requiring hundreds of hours of sifting through more than 100 years of title history consisting of thousands of pages of documents related to the title of the long narrow property.

Late in the year, the Core Team received news that the Great Shasta Rail Trail was accepted as one of 26 projects to receive assistance from the National Park Service’s Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program. This grant of technical assistance was key as the Core Team worked to develop a trail concept plan.

2011: Fundraising Continues and ESA Completed

A second grant from the Shasta Regional Community Foundation enabled contracting with Vestra Resources for the Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) of the rail corridor. A study of the railroad’s operations records, coupled with testing of suspicious sites yielded a detailed report that named several sites where grease and fuels used in railroad operations needed to be appropriately cleaned up. Those sites were cleaned and the hazardous materials were disposed of in 2013.

The Grassroots Fund of the Rose Foundation awarded a grant to develop public outreach materials for the project. Tracy Tuttle Design developed the logo and designed a brochure that became the foundation for the “look and feel” of the project’s outreach materials. The trail’s web site (developed by NorCal Planet Web Design with the Fund’s financial support) is the Great Shasta Rail Trail’s most important communication tool.

The Core Team continued to collaborate on other grant applications in 2011, and late in the year applied to the California Department of Transportation’s Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Fund (EEMP) for the majority of funding needed to purchase the property. Community members in Shasta and Siskiyou County also generously contributed funds to support the acquisition.

2012: Grant for Acquisition Funds Awarded and Planning Team Forms

In March of 2012, the California Transportation Commission awarded a \$350,000 EEMP grant to Shasta Land Trust for the purchase of the railroad right of way.

Staff from the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program (2010 in-kind grant) worked with the Core Team to recruit participants and collaborate with a newly formed “Planning Team”. Volunteers who joined the Planning Team committed to work together to develop a concept plan for the trail, propose site improvements and use restrictions. More than 50 organizations and individuals were invited to the March 16, 2012 kick off meeting. Invitees included land management agencies, trail user groups, and key community interest groups with a major stake in the trail project outcomes. The Planning Team met monthly for a year to develop the Vision, Goals and Guidelines, and develop the opportunities and challenges that are presented as Chapter 4 and Chapter 7 in this document.

A formal Purchase and Sale Agreement was signed by the railroad and Shasta Land Trust on March 29, 2012. This agreement established the purchase price for the trail and identified tasks that must be completed to finalize the purchase. (Shasta Land Trust will donate the property to the Great Shasta Rail Trail Association soon after its acquisition.)

More Core Team grant writing yielded funds to support engineering inspections of the proposed trail’s bridges and culverts and to support preparation of the trail concept plan. The National Scenic Byways Program granted more than \$180,000, and is supplemented by smaller grants from the USDA Forest Service.





The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy provided assistance to the Planning Team's efforts, writing a report which detailed recommendations regarding road crossing and safety, focusing on the two at grade crossings of State Route 89.

In coordination with the Core Team, the River Exchange, a nonprofit organization located in Dunsmuir, California, received a grant from Bella Vista Foundation to assess the condition of stream crossings along the McCloud Railway in the McCloud River Drainage and develop plans to restore degraded streams.

2013: Landscape Architects Lend a Hand and Great Shasta Rail Trail Association Is Formed

The National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance recruited support for the project from the San Francisco and Sacramento chapters of the American Society of Landscape Architects. In February, Planning Team members journeyed to Sacramento for an all day workshop with twelve professional landscape architects who volunteered to create some conceptual drawings to kick start the trail infrastructure design process. The concepts developed at that session compose Chapter 6: Trail Design in this document.

While Shasta Land Trust was willing to facilitate the purchase of the right of way, a trail management entity was needed to hold title to the property over the long term and manage it as a public recreation trail. The Board of Directors of Save Burney Falls offered to appoint new trail focused Board members to their organization and add management of the

property as a public trail to the organization's purpose. The transition went smoothly and the "Great Shasta Rail Trail Association" (GSRTA) was formed June 28, 2013 with four members of the Core Team serving as Board members of the GSRTA to assure continuity.

In late 2013, Shasta Land Trust and the railroad signed an amendment to the Purchase and Sale Agreement, reducing the purchase price of the right of way in exchange for the GSRTA taking on a few tasks that were originally assigned to the railroad prior to transfer of the property. The new purchase price was within the amount of funding Shasta Land Trust and the Core Team had raised for acquisition through grants, fund-raisers, and private donations.

2014 – 2015: Complete Acquisition and Open Segments of Trail

It is expected that the Shasta Land Trust will complete the purchase of the trail corridor and donate it to the GSRTA in 2014-15. A plan is already in place to perform urgently needed maintenance on the trail.

Chapter 7 of this document describes phased development of the trail, opening sections close to the two towns as soon as possible. These plans arose from the advice of professional trail developers whose volunteer labor has been invaluable. As this plan is being written, the GSRTA Board of Directors continues to plan for trail development — writing a signage plan, looking for funding for equipment, and planning to recruit, train, and manage the next wave of volunteers that will be needed to implement all of these plans.

2016 – 2021: Develop Trailheads and Signs; Rehabilitate bridges

Opening the entire 80 miles of trail will be a long term process. Success in implementation depends upon the ability to raise funds for the planned upgrades of bridges, improvement of trail surface, installation and construction of trailheads, and other projects.





“It’s not enough to be busy, so are
the ants. The question is, what are we
busy about?”

— Henry David Thoreau

