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Moffett Field trail will connect MV, Sunnyvale

by **Nick Veronin**
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Efforts to link 26 miles of Bay Area trails north and south of Mountain View will finally be realized this month, when a 2.4-mile path running behind Moffett Field opens to the public.

On Sept. 20, the mayors of Mountain View and Sunnyvale will take bolt cutters to the chains that currently bar access to the bayside path. By doing so, they will create a contiguous network of hiking and biking paths running from East Palo Alto to San Jose, moving the [www.baytrail.org San Francisco Bay Trail] project -- which aims to create an unbroken, 500-mile circle around all of San Francisco and San Pablo bays -- one step closer to completion.

"It puts 2.4 miles on to the 200 that we haven't finished yet," said Julia Miller, the former mayor of Sunnyvale who has been working with on the Bay Trail for 13 years.

She said officials from the project, an offshoot of the Association of Bay Area Governments, have been working to open the stretch of trail behind Moffett Field for more than a decade.

"This was a complicated area," said Laura Thompson, a Bay Trail project manager. "It took quite a bit of dedication from many different people. If the Bay Trail behind Moffett Field can be completed, it's a real testament to the Bay Trail vision as a whole."

==B Linking trails==

The Bay Trail is composed of many smaller trails, such as the Stevens Creek and Shoreline trails, and runs intermittently along the edge of the San Francisco and San Pablo bays. The newly opened stretch will connect Baylands Park in Sunnyvale with Shoreline Park in Mountain View.

Miller, who sits on the Bay Trail board of directors, said that the project has a little less than 200 miles left to cover. Gaps, like the one closing this month, exist all around the Bay Area and vary in distance.

Miller said she has been meeting monthly with various stakeholders since 2005 in an effort to close the Moffett Field gap. Forging agreements with Cargill Salt, NASA Ames, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project, the 129th Air Rescue Wing and the cities of Sunnyvale and Mountain View was a challenge, she said.

Some of the initial concerns surrounding the opening of the trail came from the 129th Air Rescue Wing, which had a munitions bunker near the trail, and biologists from NASA Ames, who worried that allowing people to access the area would disrupt local wildlife. That bunker has since been moved and according to Miller and Thompson, all wildlife concerns have been addressed. A wildlife biologist from NASA Ames could not be reached for comment.

Now that all the parties have come to an agreement, Miller is very satisfied, and said residents of Mountain View ought to be, as well.

"It's a legacy," she said. The trail will be an asset to runners, hikers, bikers and wildlife enthusiasts alike, she said.

"When you get out there, you're just two miles from downtown Castro Street and you're out there with nature. It's a great outdoor experience," said Miller.

"Opening the Bay Trail behind Moffett Field could be a real catalyst to many aspiring bicycle commuters," Thompson

added. "Residents of the South Bay now have a new opportunity to access the edge of the shoreline, and now two very popular regional parks will be connected."

The Sept. 20 chain-cutting ceremony will be open to the public and starts at 10:30 a.m. Those driving to the event should arrive at 10:30 a.m. at the parking area for the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant, located on Carl Road, just off of Caribbean Drive in Sunnyvale, where a shuttle will be waiting to take people to the event.

Cyclists can ride directly to the ceremony at the Sunnyvale Gate.

For more information contact Laura Thompson at 510-464-7935 or laurat@abag.ca.gov. Information is also available on the [www.baytrail.org Bay Trail website].

Moffett Field bayside trail

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