

# Ridge Lines

FALL 2024



## Celebrating 35 Years

### LEADING THE WAY WITH VISION



**T**hirty-five years ago, on a crisp May morning, under clear blue skies and among majestic redwoods, a handful of equestrians could be seen riding up a trail from the west. They joined a small gathering of hikers, mountain bicyclists, park officials, and Ridge Trail committee members. A ribbon was cut and the first section of the Bay Area Ridge Trail was officially dedicated with 7.7 miles in Purisima Creek Redwoods Preserve in San Mateo County. Later that afternoon, a similar celebration was held to dedicate another 6.2 miles of Ridge Trail from Wunderlich to Huddart County Park.



Barbara Rice (left of center), Brian O'Neill (center) and William Penn Mott, Jr. (right of center) cut the ribbon on an early Ridge Trail segment.

The dream of a Bay Area Ridge Trail was first articulated in the 1960s by William “Bill” Penn Mott, Jr., a leading visionary of the parks and recreation movement, while he was general manager of the East Bay Regional Park District (he later served as director for California State Parks and the National Park Service). In the late 1980s, a coalition of trail enthusiasts led by the late Brian O'Neill, Superintendent of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, convened, mapped out an initial route, and established the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council, finally bringing Mott's dream to life.



David Hansen, who was then land manager for the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District and helped plan the first dedication, was fortunate to attend Bill Mott's debut party for the Ridge Trail at Fort Mason in San Francisco. While listening to Bill and Brian talk about the trail, David recalls, “We had a lot of existing trails on public land all around the Bay, so it was obvious that we could pick up a hundred miles of trail to dedicate right away. What an exciting prospect.”

Between 1989 and 1990, the Council did just that, overseeing a rapid succession of trail openings. Their efforts manifested 100 miles of dedicated trail across eight Bay Area counties in that first year alone. Over time, the pace slowed, but the drive to fulfill the vision and fully connect the Ridge Trail remains alive today.

Thanks to the inspired leadership of those early visionaries, public, private, and nonprofit partners, and the tireless work of advocates and volunteers, 413 miles of Ridge Trail are now open, connecting people, parks, and communities across all nine Bay Area counties.

As we celebrate the 35th anniversary of the first 100 miles of Ridge Trail, we extend our deep appreciation to all those who brought it to life, and to those of you today—partners, volunteers, members, and supporters—who continue to help the Bay Area Ridge Trail grow, mile by mile.



**Calistoga Ridge Trail**  
4.2 NEW miles

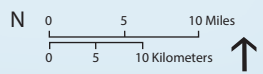


**Doris Klein Ridge Trail**  
2.1 NEW miles



# BAY AREA RIDGE TRAIL

- Dedicated Trail
- Planned Trail
- First 100 Miles
- New Dedications



# Celebrating Old, New, and Future Ridge Trail

## THE FIRST 100 MILES

We've traveled a long way since our first miles were dedicated, but these iconic trails are just as impressive to explore today as they were 35 years ago. The map to the left highlights the first 100 miles of Ridge Trail dedicated from May 1989 to June 1990. Particularly striking are the long connected sections that quickly began to form. In September 1989, 26 continuous miles were dedicated in Marin County from the Golden Gate Bridge to Samuel P. Taylor State Park. In June 1990, another long stretch was created with the dedication of 32 miles from Tilden Regional Park in Contra Costa County to Cull Canyon Recreation Area in Alameda County.

## New Miles in the North Bay

Fast forward to today, and the celebration of two new Ridge Trail sections bringing us to a total of 413 dedicated miles.



On August 16th, we joined Napa partners to cut the ribbon on 4.2 miles of newly-built Ridge Trail. This multi-use segment stretches from Bothe-Napa Valley State Park to the historic Calistoga Depot. For determined trekkers, a passable gap along Lincoln Ave. (soon to be improved) leads to Robert Louis Stevenson State Park and 21 more miles of connected Ridge Trail, including a spur to Mt. St. Helena's summit. Thanks to our partners, especially the Napa Valley Vine Trail (which shares an alignment with this section), for their leadership in bringing this trail to life, as well as Napa Valley Transportation Authority and Napa County Parks and Open Space District. This new connection opens up countless future adventures in Napa County. Find maps and more information at [RidgeTrail.org/Calistoga](https://RidgeTrail.org/Calistoga).

August was indeed a busy month on the Ridge Trail! We also cut the ribbon on August 21st, celebrating 2.1 new miles in the brand new Patwino Worrta Kodoi Dihi Open Space Park, near Fairfield. This long-awaited, multi-use trail winds through oak tree-dotted hills up to vistas of surrounding

Solano County and beyond. In the spring, visitors can enjoy lively streams and take in abundant wildflowers here. This Ridge Trail section is named in honor of Doris Klein (1926–2022), a Ridge Trail founder, board member, and tireless Solano County trail advocate. Doris led countless outings and helped make many miles of Ridge Trail a reality, and the support in her honor ensures future generations can enjoy these beautiful outdoor spaces. Find maps and more information at [RidgeTrail.org/Patwino](https://RidgeTrail.org/Patwino).



## MORE MILES AHEAD

We're not done yet! Our team is now working closely with partners in Santa Clara County to add another 12 miles to the Ridge Trail network, from the Casa Loma Staging Area to Calero County Park. We look forward to dedicating and celebrating the first miles along our new Southern Loop since amending our planned route last spring.

# Belonging on the Trail

By Natalia Cortes, Event and Volunteer Manager



When I'm out in the field with people from all over the Bay Area, I often hear a surprised, "This is what you do for work!?" I smile and express gratitude, affirming that yes, creating and sharing joy on the Ridge Trail is my job. The Ridge Trail Council has policies and a Strategic Plan that aims to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion on the trail and in all our work. This doesn't happen overnight. It takes time and intentional action to build a sense of belonging. Reflecting on our incredible event season so far, I want to highlight **three events that stood out** to me in creating welcoming and authentic spaces, reflecting the beautiful diversity of the Bay Area.



## NORTH MARIN RIDGE RUN

It's a cold and rainy March morning at Samuel P. Taylor State Park. Anil Rao and his South Bay-based running community are gathered under canopies, getting ready to welcome racers. Warm chai and hearty vegetable masala bubble on camp stoves. Alongside a beautiful and challenging race course, there's also a cultural exchange. The simple and special act of sharing food, culture, and love for nature makes this event one of my favorites to host each year.

## AFFINITY SPACES

I know firsthand the importance of creating affinity spaces—gatherings of people with shared identities or experiences—in the outdoors. I'm grateful for the powerful collaborations we've done this year with two BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) women-led groups. We hosted a hike for Women's History Month with Let's Go Outside Y'all, and a bike ride with California Cadence Queens for black, brown, and indigenous women. On both occasions, there was a relaxed environment where connection was at the forefront. During our bike adventure, we had over 23,000 acres of protected lands to ourselves. We had honest, unfiltered conversations. We could unapologetically exist.



## MIND/BODY/NATURE

In May, the Ridge Trail Council piloted our Mind/Body/Nature trail outing series, funded by the Urban Grant program from Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority. These Máyyan 'Ooyákma Open Space Preserve programs go beyond simply meeting up at a trailhead and hiking. Activities like playtime, yoga, and visual exercises are combined with learning about local biodiversity and mental health practices. The goal is for hikers to leave with tools to foster mental well-being on their future trail adventures. I heard about struggles, healing, and how nature helped so many, so I'm excited to share these outings with more community groups in the fall.

CIRCUMNAVIGATORS

**Richie Bracamonte,  
Just Getting Started**



Born and raised in the Bay Area, Richie began his circumnavigation in April 2024 after looking for a new way to explore his own backyard. He says, “I’ve only just started but it’s been an eye-opening journey that reminds me why I love the Bay Area. There are so many new areas to explore, history to learn, and stunning views on every trail.

“It’s also very approachable, with hikes varying from two to 12 miles. Dipping your toe in with a short hike will instantly get you excited to do more. Just make sure you bring your battery bank for your phone, use plenty of sunscreen, and pack water! And plan out your hike with tools like the AllTrails app or Ridge Trail website, which has detailed maps and navigation tips as well.”

Check out Richie’s videos documenting his journey at [youtube.com/@richeese](https://www.youtube.com/@richeese) or follow him on Instagram @richeese.

**Dawn & Dan Page,  
Journey Complete**

It started as an ambitious goal: hike the entire Ridge Trail in 100 days, write a book, and get sponsors to support the endeavor. Although the goal post shifted a bit—completing sections at their leisure and buying their own gear—it was still an ambitious goal, one that Dawn and Dan Page completed three years later. From April 2021 to May 2024, Dawn and Dan trekked 530 miles, spent 71 days on the trail, and climbed 72,297 feet. The journey resulted in a collection of treasured memories, as well as a valuable resource for other circumnavigators: their blog, Coastsideslacking. After each hike, the trekkers detailed their experience with logistics notes, history tidbits, and beautiful photos and videos. They also included a donation link on each post, rallying support for the Ridge Trail as they lived out its vision of a long distance trail experience. Thank you, Dawn and Dan, and congratulations! Read about their experience at [coastsideslacking.com/bay-area-ridge-trail/](https://coastsideslacking.com/bay-area-ridge-trail/).



**STAFF CHANGES**

This summer we said “au revoir” to Sharon Bone, our Operations & Database Coordinator of over six years. We hope she enjoys her retirement and look forward to seeing her out on the trail! We also said “hello” to new staff members Joey Rocha-Perez, Database & Operations Administrator, and Gillian Schneider, Office & Administrative Coordinator. Join us in welcoming them to the team!

**WELCOME, NEW BOARD MEMBERS!**



**HEATHER MINNER**  
*Partner, Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger*

“I am excited to put my land use experience to work for the Bay Area Ridge Trail and look forward to being part of a community that works towards and celebrates new trail connections.”



**KEN GRANT**  
*Core Data Reliability, Lead, Google*

“I’ve been hiking the Bay Area Ridge Trail since its first year, and I’m thrilled for the opportunity to contribute to its continued growth.”

# Stewardship

We often discuss the first two parts of our mission—planning and promoting the Ridge Trail—but sustaining it is just as important. With a staff of ten and 413 miles of trails across nine counties, we rely on our incredible partners and passionate volunteers to achieve this part of our mission!



## KEEPING MARTINEZ ON THE RIGHT PATH

In June, a small team of dedicated volunteers visited the City of Martinez to replace old, faded, and damaged Ridge Trail blazes and directional signs. All told, they replaced signs at 15 locations between I-680 and the Nejedly Staging Area. The team employed their collective experience, plus several different tools and hardware, to remove and replace all the trail signs. Many thanks to Phil Bellman, member, avid volunteer and circumnavigator; Bob Berman, board member; and Harry Englebright, retired board member, for keeping Martinez explorers on the right path. Phil has now turned his attention to fixing up our signs in the Marin Headlands, so keep an eye out for our shiny new Ridge Trail blazes!

## RIDGE TRAIL SERVICE DAY: NOVEMBER 2

Feeling inspired by our sign volunteers? Pitch in on Saturday, November 2nd for Ridge Trail Service Day, our biggest trail stewardship event of the year. For 16 years, hundreds of volunteers have hit the trail with us and our partners to care for the Ridge Trail around the Bay Area. Each year, we host 10-15 projects all around the region, with activities including everything from trimming back overgrown greenery to mending ruts in the trail to installing small bridges. No matter your age or ability, anyone and everyone can pitch in on Ridge Trail Service Day to keep the trail in tip-top shape. Registration will open soon, so watch out for our e-newsletter and learn more at [ridgetrail.org/serviceday](https://ridgetrail.org/serviceday).



# Partnerships Make it Possible

In celebration of the Ridge Trail’s 35th anniversary and the first 100 miles of dedicated trail, we want to shine a light on our park partners whose support makes the Ridge Trail possible.



## MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

The very first Ridge Trail sections were dedicated in partnership with the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (Midpen) in May 1989. Since then, Midpen has been a major champion of the trail, opening almost 50 miles through nine open space preserves. Connecting and extending the Ridge Trail is a priority in Midpen’s Measure AA Bond Expenditure Plan, so we also owe our thanks to the voters for supporting the protection of and access to our shared natural spaces on the Peninsula. Currently, the Ridge Trail is collaborating with Midpen to complete safe trail and wildlife crossings of Highway 17 near Los Gatos. Once this highway barrier is crossed and adjacent trail connections are made to close a 4-mile gap, some 50 miles of Ridge Trail will be linked, along with 30,000 acres of parks and open space preserves. We are grateful for Midpen’s steadfast partnership over the last 35 years and look forward to dedicating and stewarding many more trail miles together in the future.



## OUR FIRST 100 MILES PARTNERS



## SAN MATEO COUNTY PARKS

The second section of Ridge Trail dedicated in 1989, by just a matter of hours, was a 6.2-mile section from Wunderlich to Huddart County Park, in partnership with San Mateo County Parks (County Parks). Although a small portion of the Ridge Trail traveling through Wunderlich County Park has since been rerouted through El Corte de Madera Preserve, County Parks continues to champion the Ridge Trail and maintain 14.5 miles in Huddart and Sanborn County parks. On June 1, 2024, County Parks and the Ridge Trail co-hosted a National Trails Day stewardship event and volunteers cut back overgrowth, improved drainage, and repaired tread along the Skyline Trail near Huddart Park. County Parks is also a long-time partner in our biggest annual stewardship event, Ridge Trail Service Day. The Ridge Trail is deeply thankful for County Parks’ partnership through the years and we look forward to working together to keep the Ridge Trail in great condition for years to come.





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# Built to Last

## A RIDGE TRAIL PLAYLIST

**R**idge Trail staff decided to have some musical fun for our 35th anniversary, so we created a Spotify playlist featuring songs from our inaugural years. Some of the song lyrics spoke to us directly, touching on the **enduring legacy of the Bay Area Ridge Trail**, like “Built to Last” by the Grateful Dead (1989). Others highlighted the partnerships and hard work required to open over 400 miles of trail, as in Vanilla Ice’s “Ice Ice Baby” (1990) with the line “alright, stop, collaborate and listen.”

Turn up your stereo and groove while pondering what the Ridge Trail means to you today. With “If I Could Turn Back Time” by Cher (1989) you might reminisce about past hiking or biking adventures on the trail with friends. Or, consider your role in sustaining the Ridge Trail as you tune into “We Didn’t Start the Fire” by Billy Joel (1989) and envision what a fully completed trail will mean to the next generation of Bay Area kids.

So, what can you do today to keep the momentum going? Prince’s classic song “Kiss” (1986) reminds us that “you don’t have to be rich” to help by considering a **legacy gift to the Ridge Trail**. It’s the most significant way to support the trail, and costs you nothing today or during your lifetime.

50 miles  
in  
5 years

## A TRAIL FUND IN ACTION

To accelerate progress in adding miles and closing gaps, we established the Ridge Trail Action Fund—a special projects resource offering timely and flexible funding where it’s needed most. Our goal is to open 50 miles of new trail in the next five years, and with your support, we can make it happen. Learn more at [ridgetrail.org/trail-action-fund](https://ridgetrail.org/trail-action-fund).

You’ve got “The Right Stuff” (New Kids on the Block, 1988) to help build and preserve the Ridge Trail legacy. In honor of our 35th anniversary, the Council is looking for **35 new members to join our Legacy Circle**. Simply let us know that you have included the RT in your will, trust or estate plans and you’re in! We’ll send a “First 100 Miles” concert-style shirt your way and save you a seat at next spring’s Gratitude Gathering, the culmination of our anniversary celebrations.

We’ll end with a bit of wisdom from Paula Abdul in “Opposites Attract” (1989): “when we all get together, it just all works out.” Join us in song, or on the trail this year, because we can’t do it “without you”! (“With or Without You” U2, 1987).

Jam out to our playlist at [bit.ly/35-playlist](https://bit.ly/35-playlist). To learn more about our Legacy Circle program go to [RidgeTrail.org/Legacy](https://RidgeTrail.org/Legacy), email [Giving@ridgetrail.org](mailto:Giving@ridgetrail.org), or call Marie at 415-561-2595 x208.