

Katherine Douglas

Public Comment

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From: Mark Wilkinson <mwilkinson@sbtrails.org>
Sent: Thursday, February 5, 2026 5:19 PM
To: sbcob
Subject: County Draft Environmental Justice Element Comment Letter
Attachments: County-Draft-Environmental-Justice-Element-Comment-02-06-26.pdf

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Dear Clerk of the Board,

Please find attached our comment letter regarding the **Draft Environmental Justice Element** being discussed at the February 10th Board of Supervisors meeting. We appreciate the County's continued efforts to advance equity, public health, environmental quality, and recreation for communities across Santa Barbara County.

Regards,



Mark Wilkinson
Executive Director

Santa Barbara County Trails Council

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SANTA BARBARA COUNTY
Trails Council

February 6, 2026

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Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Re: County Draft Environmental Justice Element

Dear Chair Nelson and Honorable Members of the Board:

On behalf of the Santa Barbara County Trails Council, thank you for the opportunity to provide input ahead of the Draft Environmental Justice Element hearing scheduled for February 10th. We appreciate the County's continued efforts to advance equity, public health, environmental quality, and recreation for communities across Santa Barbara County.

We are writing to request that the Environmental Justice Element to prominently identify trails as popular, low-cost facilities to serve the needs of environmental justice communities (**Policy 1**). The same facility infrastructure is a popular, low-cost way to promote physical activity for community members residing within EJs (**Policy 3**). As noted below, the staff can easily address this oversight by consistently using the phrase "*parks, trails, and open space*."

Walking is one of the most inclusive forms of physical activity available. It is free, requires no special equipment, and fits naturally into daily life for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. Parks, trails, and open spaces offer a highly cost-effective way to support physical health, mental well-being, and social connection while requiring modest infrastructure investment.

Trails also function as essential active transportation corridors, connecting neighborhoods to schools, parks, community centers, and local services. In **environmental justice communities**, where residents often face limited access to green space, higher pollution burdens, and fewer affordable recreation options, trails represent a practical and meaningful investment in everyday quality of life.

For these reasons, we support clarifying and strengthening the following Environmental Justice Element policies to include trails and open space explicitly:

EJ1.2 Community Siting and Improvement Priorities

When considering new or improved public facilities within EJs, prioritize siting, provision of County services, infrastructure, and amenities based on community feedback (e.g., community centers, schools, parks, **trails**, and open space, emergency services, and improvements for transportation infrastructure, such as EV charging, road maintenance, bike, and pedestrian facilities, including ADA accessibility).

EJ3.2 Increase Access to Parks, Trails and Open Space

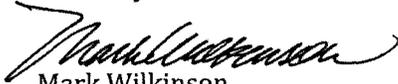
Partner with schools, places of worship, state and federal lands, and businesses to expand access to green spaces and recreation areas, especially in EJs with limited access to parks, **trails**, and open space.

In addition to physical access, we encourage the County to continue emphasizing procedural justice in recreation planning. Achieving environmental justice in recreation requires not only access to facilities, but also inclusive decision-making processes, including the establishment of a County Supervisor-appointed County Environmental Justice Advisory Committee.

We strongly encourage the County to explicitly recognize walking and trail infrastructure as essential public facilities within the Environmental Justice Element.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Wilkinson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and "W".

Mark Wilkinson
Executive Director