









# Sawyer Camp Trail Self-guided Tour

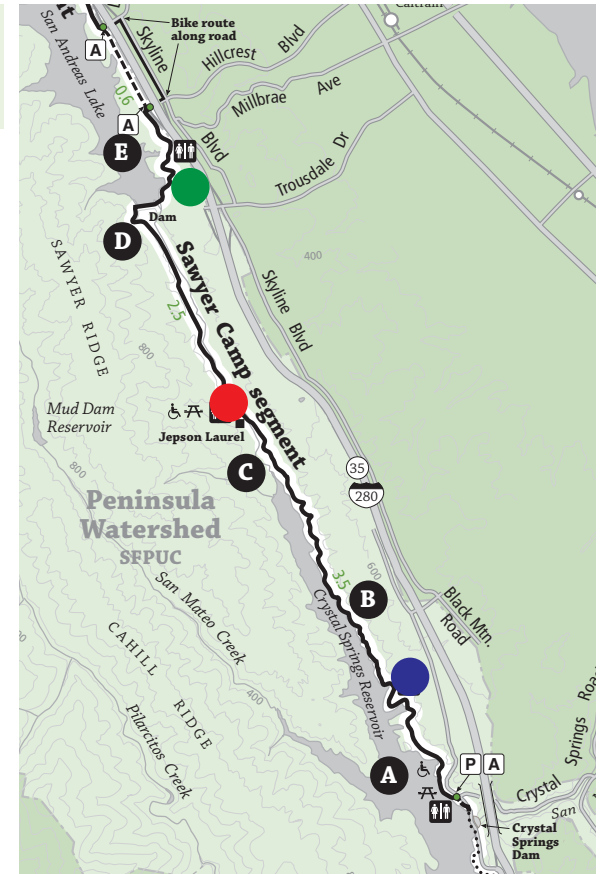
The Sawyer Camp Trail is a 6 mile segment of the Crystal Springs Regional Trail, a planned 17 mile trail that one day will provide a continuous route from San Bruno to Woodside along the Crystal Springs Reservoirs. **You can start your tour from the North or South End of the trail.**

Self-guided Tour Distances from South:		Self-guided Tour Distances from North:	
	1 Mile Marker and Back – 2 miles (45 mins)		San Andreas Dam and Back – 2 miles (45 mins)
	Jepson Laurel and Back – 7 miles (2.5 hours)		Jepson Laurel and Back – 5 miles (2 hours)
	San Andreas Dam and Back – 10 miles (4 hours)		5 Mile Marker and Back – 10 miles (4 hours)



**A: The Reservoirs:** The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission Peninsula Watershed covers 23,000 acres and contains three reservoirs: the Upper and Lower Crystal Springs Reservoirs and San Andreas Lake. The dam that created San Andreas Lake is a 100 foot tall earthen dam originally built in 1868 and since has received some upgrades. The San Andreas Fault runs directly under this dam. The other earthen dam became the causeway between the two lower lakes and also the route for Highway 92. It was completed in 1877 and created the Upper (southern) Crystal Springs Reservoir. Crystal Springs Dam (pictured), just south of the Sawyer Camp Trail, was built across San Mateo Creek in 1888 to form the Lower (northern) Crystal Springs Reservoir. It was one of the first concrete gravity

dams in the Western United States and survived both the 1906 and 1989 earthquakes. The dam has been retrofitted in the event of an earthquake and modified to increase water storage capacity. Some of the water in these lakes comes from nearby creeks or rainwater, but most is pumped in from the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir in Yosemite National Park. The reservoirs are dedicated as a water source for the city of San Francisco and they would serve as a back-up water source for the Peninsula and surrounding areas in case of emergency.



## B: Historic Route:

Sawyer Camp Trail runs along a very historic corridor in California history. On November 4th, 1769, Gaspar de Portola and his expedition camped underneath what is now San Andreas Lake, after descending Sweeney Ridge. They were the first Europeans to discover San Francisco Bay. The Expedition of 1775 to 1776 led by Juan Bautista de Anza also followed the route of Portola passing through this valley. In the mid- 1800's the land was owned by Leander Sawyer and Sawyer Camp Trail was the road Sawyer used to access his camp, which was south of the Jepson Laurel tree. The camp served as an inn and lodge for local travelers as the trail was once part of the stagecoach route between San Francisco to Half Moon Bay. As seen in the 1910 photo to the left, this trail was a favorite of motorists out for a Sunday drive. In 1978, the trail was closed to vehicles and opened as a multi-use recreation trail. Today, it is the most popular trail in San Mateo County with over half a million users annually!

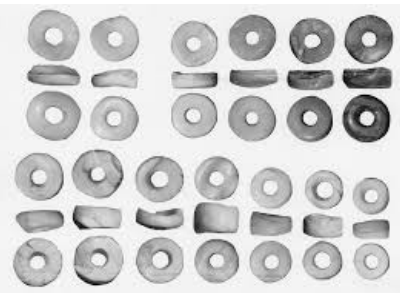
### C: Jepson Laurel:

This California Bay Laurel tree is believed to be approximately 600 years old and is thought to be the oldest bay tree in California. In 1923, the tree was named in honor of the famed California botanist Willis Lin Jepson, whose legacy lives on in the form of the Jepson Manual, used by botanists and plant enthusiasts to identify species in California. California Bay trees have long, skinny, pointed leaves. You may recognize the smell of the freshly crushed leaves as something very similar to the bay leaves you might add to your spaghetti sauce or other cooking recipes!



### D: Original Inhabitants:

The original inhabitants of this area are currently referred to as the Ohlone people. The Ohlone people prior to the first European contact were made up of more than 50 tribelets with more than 7 different languages. They lived in the Peninsula, East Bay, and South Bay down to Monterey. These tribelets had seasonal villages that they lived in and they would move to different areas depending on the season and the food and resources to collect. The Ohlone were more than hunter and gatherers; they were land managers. They would manage the landscape by weeding out plants and by burning areas to stimulate new growth and promote the favored grassland landscape for game animals. They cultivated particular plants for their use in weaving baskets, creating arrow shafts, and a variety of other useful objects for their society. Acorns were a staple food for the Ohlone. They created a soup with the acorn pulp after a tedious process of leeching out the bitter tannins.



They then cooked the acorn meal in a woven basket using hot rocks, careful not to burn the basket. The Ohlone used Olivella and abalone shells to create hooks for fishing and beads (pictured) as currency in trades with other tribes (obsidian blades were obtained through these trades). These shells were collected on the coast, but have been found in archaeological digs all over California. Descendants of the Ohlone people still live here and are actively working to relearn their traditions to keep their customs and languages alive.

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### E: San Andreas Fault:

Sawyer Camp Trail parallels a natural rift valley formed by the infamous San Andreas Fault. This fault passes directly through the trail as it crosses the San Andreas Dam as shown in the picture. The rift valley is formed by the natural depression caused by two plates moving past each other in a motion called “transform.” The west side of the San Andreas Fault, including most of the Coastal Range in San Mateo County, is located on the Pacific Plate and this plate is slowly moving North, about 2 cm a year. The east side of the San Andreas Fault, which includes most of California, is located on the North American Plate which is moving south. Over time, the energy builds up between these two plates as they stretch to move in opposite directions and the energy is released in the form of an earthquake!



**Bald Eagles** – In 2012, two adult Bald Eagles nested at the Crystal Springs Reservoir - the first recorded nesting site in San Mateo County in almost a century! Each year since then they have continued to nest near the reservoir. Keep your eyes open for a chance to see the U.S. National Emblem!

**When you're done with your tour, please return this guide to the kiosk for the next visitor.** If you find this guide, please return it to: Coyote Point Recreation Area, 1701 Coyote Point Drive, San Mateo CA

Sawyer Camp Trail is a part of **San Mateo County Parks**, which manages parks, preserves, trails, and historic sites throughout the county to preserve public lands and provide opportunities for education and recreation.

For more information, visit [www.SMCoParks.org](http://www.SMCoParks.org).

**San Mateo County Parks**  
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