

Subject: RE: ASRA New Trails

Date: Sun, 20 Oct 2013 21:46:50 +0000

From: Brandt, Jonathan@Parks <Jonathan.Brandt@parks.ca.gov>

State Parks does not have a formulated process by which new trails can be proposed and processed.

It naturally becomes a highly political process from the very beginning. To get a project "on the list" to be considered is often something I do not have a firm grasp on, myself. This is because it is at the discretion of the top management of Superintendents. I continue to be confused with decisions of priority and importance.

It seems to be a cycle of: you need funding to get it considered, you need a plan to get funding and of course you need funding to even make a plan. (So how do you start?) Then you have to deal with; not so much the political opposition, as much as the lack of administrative courage to make an "unpopular" decision against opposition.

The North Fork Trail seems to be somewhat of a brainchild of Greg Wells (a retired ASRA Ranger from the 90's). He built the FDLT and Connector trails. I'm not sure how long he's been working on this idea, but it has been a Placer County funded Environmental Impact Report (EIR) project for several years now. It is my understanding that the EIR is completed and the project technically could be started.

The only hold up seems to be the Bureau of Reclamation who seems to be resistant to moving forward against any level of opposition.

<http://www.placer.ca.gov/departments/facility/parks/nforktrail>

When I wanted to push through the Culvert Project I was told that the administrative delay for environmental review would be 1-2 years. Not including the time it took to write the plan, it took roughly three months to receive confirmation of filing the NEO (Notice of Exemption).

This is a very different process from new trails. The Department is legally exempted from needing an EIR for maintenance and repair of "existing facilities". Even though the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) specifies a list of Categorical Exemptions, the usual "red tape" is a process for officially filing and publicly posting the plans.

This process is not legally required, but if it is done it legally gives a limit of 60 days from date of posting for anyone to file for formal opposition to the project. It is essentially a safeguard against opposition being able to file for a court order to legally stop the project. But again this only applies to maintenance of existing facilities, not new projects.

In the end, I proved the theory that "it'll never happen" wrong, but at the same time; I had to spend hours surveying, meeting and planning to write a 14 page project description that was necessarily detailed, but ultimately condensed into a single paragraph description in the final NOE. And this is all for something that is "Categorically Exempted".

However, an Environmental Impact Report (required for new projects) is a very extensive, time consuming and costly process by which a whole bunch of experts in specific fields of science are required to evaluate the project with a fine tooth comb and write a detailed report that essentially states that there will be no significant environmental impact based upon very specific project plans. An early level of the project involves a survey of the project area for archeological sites that may need to be protected, plant and animal habitats that may need to be protected. This can take several years depending upon the designated specialists opinions on how long and when the project area should be monitored. For instance an ecologist may require a study be done specifically during the breeding season of a specific animal etc. etc. Completely impossible to predict or estimate. Certain things don't move forward until other steps are completed and signed off.

Sorry if this makes it more confusing, but it's my best attempt to explain what I understand about the process.

Jon Brandt
State Park Ranger
Auburn State Recreation Area
Mammoth Bar Lead
Trail Coordinator
(530) 823-4182

Trail Usage and Safety Guidelines from around the U.S. and from New Zealand

From AmericanTrails.org: Trail Maintenance and Management

Providing appropriate recreational opportunities for all trail users

<http://www.americantrails.org/resources/ManageMaintain/MgmtEqMKelley.html>

Introduction: This presentation is intended for equestrians and land managers who must grapple with the problems of providing appropriate recreational opportunities to all users, including cyclists and equestrians. It will cover all aspects of relations between equestrians, horses, bikes and bicyclists. The basic thesis is that horses and bikes can, and indeed must, share trails together with other non-motorized users.

<http://www.americantrails.org/resources/ManageMaintain/dayzoning.html>

Introduction: In crowded recreational locales such as open space parks, bikers and hikers increasingly are finding that their recreational outing has evolved into a series of maneuvers to avoid other users. Hikers are constantly dodging bikers, stepping aside to let the faster bikers pass. Bikers have to slow down or stop frequently for hikers in places where they can't pass safely. Wider track trails, which allow faster biking speeds, can also result in conflicts if the bikers don't slow down when passing hikers because some bikers regard this as an inconvenience.

Tahoe Rim Trail (TRT)

http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5238370.pdf

- Mountain bikers are asked to stay off a 9 mile section of the TRT on odd numbered calendar days, between Tahoe Meadows (Mt. Rose Hwy) and Tunnel Creek (The North end of the Flume Trail).
 - **This is an advisory only.**
 - The Snow Valley Peak Trail (which is part of the TRT) is currently not bike legal, may adopt an odd/even schedule to allow bikes. (<http://www.bchn.us/resources/SnowValleyPeakTRTProposal.pdf>)
-

Marin County, CA

Marinbike.org's Off-Road Trail Access and Education Program:

<http://www.marinbike.org/Campaigns/MTB/Launch.shtml>

East Bay, Northern CA

- Maps (like the Black Diamond Park) shows trails that are accessible to mountain bikes and equestrians, others that are for foot traffic only. http://www.ebparks.org/parks/black_diamond#map
 - Nice website with easy access to activity information:
<http://www.ebparks.org/iwantto#gsc.tab=0> - <http://www.ebparks.org/activities/biking/mountain>
-

Mt. Baker – Snoqualmie National Forest

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/recmain/mbs/recreation>

Middle Fork Trail #1003 good example of usage:

- http://www.fs.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsinternet!/ut/p/c4/04_SB8K8xLLM9MSSzPy8xBz9CP0os3gDfxMDT8MwRydLA1cj72BTJw8jAwjQL8h2VAQAzHJMsQ!!/?ss=110605&ttype=recarea&recid=18006&actid=24&navtype=BROWSEBYSUBJECT&position=BROWSEBYSUBJECT&navid=1100000000000000&pnavid=&cid=null&pname=Mt.+Baker-Snoqualmie+National+Forest+-+Middle+Fork+Trail+%231003
- Open to mountain bikes only on odd-numbered calendar days June 1 - October 31. Season opening/closure for bicycles depending on trail conditions.
Open to horses July 15 - October 31.

Uinta-Wasatch-Cache NF

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/uwcnf/recreation/hiking/recarea/?recid=9047&actid=24>

<http://parks.slco.org/MillcreekCanyon/>

The Big Water Trail is CLOSED to mountain bikes on ODD numbered calendar days.

- Even-numbered days -- Bicycles are allowed on Big Water, Little Water and Great Western trails.
- Odd-numbered days -- Bicycles are not allowed on the upper Mill Creek Big Water, Little Water and Great Western trails.
- Bikes are always allowed on the Pipeline trail (regardless of day.)

Boulder, CO

City Of Boulder's Open Space and Mountain Parks Trail Usage

<https://bouldercolorado.gov/osmp/basic-trail-information>

Informative "Share the Trail" information about sharing the trail, safety, etiquette

- <http://bouldermountainbike.org/content/trail-etiquette#flyer>
- <http://bouldermountainbike.org/content/trail-etiquette#video>
- <http://bouldermountainbike.org/content/trail-etiquette#becool>
- <http://bouldermountainbike.org/trail/canyon-loop> The Canyon Loop in Betasso Preserve: This trail is closed to bikes on Wednesdays and Saturdays. It has a required direction for bike traffic at all times (look for the arrow when you get on the trail). Trail direction changes on the 1st of the month.

Centennial Cone Park, CO

<http://www.clearcreeklandconservancy.org/centennial.html>

On weekdays the park is open to both mountain bikes and hikers, but on odd weekend days it is hiker only and on even weekend days it is biker only.

Hawkes Creek Farm, GA

<http://www.hawkescreekfarm.com/site/bikes-at-hawkes-creek-farm/the-trails>

- Only ride the trails on ODD numbered days (Nov. 3, May 15, etc.).
- This is a multi-use trail.
- Horses may be on the trail on EVEN numbered days.

Tsali Recreation Area, North Carolina

- On several trails, mountain bikes are allowed on certain days of the week, e.g., on the Tsali Horse Trail, cyclists are allowed on Sunday, Monday, Wednesday and Friday.
- <http://www.main.nc.us/graham/hiking/tsali.html>

Gallatin National Forest -- an example of all user groups (trying to) work together to formulate a trail share plan

- <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/gallatin/home/?cid=stelprdb5279480>
- Trail share plan/schedule: https://fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5130607.pdf

Heaphy Track - New Zealand

<http://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/tracks-and-walks/nelson-tasman/golden-bay/heaphy-track/features/heaphy-track-mountain-bike-trial/>

- One of the more popular trails in the country closed to bikes in the early 1990's.
- A 3 year pilot program was implemented in 2010 to allow bikes on the trail from May 1 to September 30th.
- This is the final year of the pilot program and by all accounts, has been a success and will continue.

The Western States Trail and Bicycles

Official Policy of the Western States Trail Foundation

The Western States Trail Foundation (WSTF) recognizes the need for additional multi-use trails in the Auburn area. We look forward to working with other trail user groups in planning, permitting, financing, and construction of new projects. There have been requests to change the designation to multi-use for portions of the Western States Trail (WST) which will allow mountain bikes access. One specific request has been to change the designation of the section of trail known as the California Loop. We do not support mountain bike usage on the California Loop and oppose a designation change.

The California Loop

In the 1970s development in the Todd Valley area west of Foresthill was infringing on the WST making it difficult for horsemen to negotiate that section. Dirt roads which had historically connected trail sections were being paved and privately held land fenced off. The WSTF, sponsor of the Tevis Cup Endurance Ride, looked into the possibility of establishing a riding and hiking trail in the canyon through Bureau of Land Management (BLM) property that would be constructed along the rim of a new lake that was supposed to be created behind the proposed Auburn Dam. This was the inception of the project that created the trail now known as the California Loop.

The project involved construction of a trail alongside historic flume lines, the development of short sections of new trail connecting various existing trails and roads, and the difficult construction of a mile of new trail high above the American river. Including permitting time, the project took several years to complete. One hundred percent of the cost of this new hiking and riding trail was paid for by the WSTF. It was the Foundation's gift to the people of California.

The Auburn Dam project was halted and the dam wasn't built. The BLM then relinquished control of the land designated for the dam and lake to the California State Parks. Commensurate with its design and intended use the California Loop was designated a hiking and riding trail, not open to mountain or dirt bikes. This was the intention when it was designed, built, and accepted by the State of California. To change this now would be a breach of trust.

Safety Considerations

Bicycles and horses do not mix well on narrow trails. There have been many serious accidents resulting in death and debilitating injuries. Experiences in other areas, or when bikes have illegally encroached on horse trails, have shown that when bicyclists ride on horse trails, horsemen are ultimately driven out due to fear of injury and death. Often, it only takes one or two scary meetings with an unexpected bicycle to keep a rider from using that trail again.

Western States Trail Foundation Commitment to the Trail

Much has been said about there being many more bicyclists than equestrians. Despite our few numbers, we have constructed and maintained the California loop for over 30 years. In the years 2007 through 2012 the WSTF has spent \$161,529 on trail maintenance. Other organizations that have made significant contributions for the maintenance of the California Loop as a hiking and riding trail are the Robie Foundation and the Western States Endurance Run. We have established an endowment fund, the Western States Trail Endowment Fund (WSTEF) for maintaining and improving the WST. As of this date we have over \$600,000 in the WSTEF. The return on this investment is one source of the money available for trail maintenance. By this standard if, as claimed by the bicyclists, they have 400 riders to one equestrian than they should be able to raise a fund of over \$240 million to construct and maintain bicycle trails. The WST wasn't just magically handed to us. The current trail is the result of 60 years of recovery of abandoned historical trails from the 1800's and the construction of new trails, all done by those who support this trail for hiking and equestrian use. During this time frame we have invested over one million dollars in the trail.

Mountain Bike Events

A mountain bike event was held in Cool where the promoters advertised "if you want to ride and slide and really tear up the trail, this is the ride to come to". We respect that there exist individual tastes about what a person considers fun, exhilarating, exciting and challenging. Riding a horse for 100 miles is some-

thing that only unique kinds of people enjoy doing. Riding a mountain bike on a trail and tearing it up is no doubt really fun for other people. And, we respect that. However; there is something called "stewardship of the land". The WST runs through some environmentally sensitive areas. The trails need to be treated with respect and are not something to go out and tear up. There are YouTube clips posted that show bicyclists illegally on the California loop. This kind of riding is destructive to this trail which was never built for this type of riding. Over time if allowed to be used in this manner, the California Loop would become unusable to hikers and to horses.

Mountain Bike and Joint-Use Trails

Mountain Bike and Joint-Use (horse and bike) trails must be constructed differently than hiking and riding trails in order for them to withstand the usage. Trails where joint-use has been successful, such as the Tahoe Rim trail, were designed with this criterion. We prefer that mountain bikers have their own trails (not joint-use) and support the building of additional trails for them, even along some of the canyons where the WST runs, just not on the same trail. In addition to the California Loop, there are other routes in the area that can be developed into bicycle trails for mountain bikers. The mountain bike clubs in the area should be capable of joining together, raising funds, planning, permitting and constructing trails appropriate for their use. We are willing to join with them in doing this, but we will defend the current status (hiking and equestrian only use) of the California Loop portion of the WST to our fullest ability.



In closing, equestrians are increasingly being crowded out as California becomes more urbanized. This trail that we have so meticulously restored and maintained is one of the last refuges for horsemen to get out and really ride. Opening it to bicycles would drive us out.

Safe Trails Alliance
Position on Safety and Etiquette on our ASRA Trails
AECW Committee Meeting
November 2013

Safe Trails Alliance feels that if all users followed the CSP rules, ASRA rules, and use common courtesy, there would be no problems on ASRA trails. These meetings were supposed to address safety and etiquette and yet not once did we hear anyone state any rules for safety or etiquette. The only research we heard was on how to “share” trails. 50% of the trails in ASRA are multiuse. If users follow the rules about which trails are open to each user group, the speeds allowed, etc. we can all get along.

Our Position:

1. STA supports IMBA’s Rules of the Trail
<http://www.imba.com/about/rules-trail>
2. STA supports IMBA’s Rules for Trail Etiquette
<http://www.imba.com/resources/risk-management/shared-trails>
3. STA supports the Mountain Bike Policy papers of The Western States Trail Foundation as already submitted to the committee, Back Country Horsemen of America (paper attached), California Equestrian Trails and Lands Coalition, and the American Hiking Society:
<http://www.calequestriancoalition.com/FinalVerCETLCSafetyGuides.htm>

<http://www.americanhiking.org/mountain-bike-position-statement/>
4. We welcome the opportunity to work with the State alongside other user groups to create new and separate trails for mountain bicyclists in the Auburn State Recreation Area. The goal of the Safe Trails Alliance is to preserve and protect the historic Western States Trail for hikers and equestrians, and advocate for its safe use in accordance with the existing regulations of the U. S. Forest Service, State of California, and the U. S. Bureau of Land Management. The portion of the WST passing through ASRA must keep its original designation for hikers and equestrians only.

The Facts:

1. There is a lot of material regarding trail and safety standards adopted by California Department of Parks and Recreation.
http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=1324

http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=23419
2. There is a lot of material regarding trail and safety standards adopted by the Federal Highway Administration.
http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational_trails/publications/conflicts_on_multiple_use_trails/conflicts03.cfm#mai
3. We already have shared use in ASRA. According to ASRA Superintendent Mike Lynch, 50% of the trails are hiker/equestrian and 50% are multi-use.

4. We believe that shared use on the current hiker/equestrian only trails in ASRA will have a negative impact on the Tevis event.

Auburn Endurance Capital of the World mission statement:

"The Endurance Capital Committee is a committee of nine members appointed by the City Council. It was established to help raise the level of endurance awareness by showcasing endurance, athletic and outdoor sporting activities that take place in and around Auburn; by promoting Auburn as a destination point for endurance and outdoor activities; by promoting a healthier lifestyle; by strengthening existing events and attracting new events to Auburn; and by assisting with the overall economic well being of Auburn. "

5. The hiker/equestrian trails in ASRA have been used by equestrians and runners for years and have remained in good shape. They have also been maintained as needed. Mountain bikes on these steep trails would do extensive damage.

http://www.safetrails.net/bike_dam.asp

6. The hiker/equestrian trails in ASRA have been used by equestrians and hikers and runners for years without any user conflicts until mountain bikers started using the trails illegally.

7. The WST was built for hikers, runners, and equestrians. It does not meet multi-use standards.

8. The Western States Trail, American Trail, and other hiking/equestrian trails in El Dorado county on the south side of the MF American River are used extensively by the huge equestrian community in Auburn Lake Trails, Greenwood, Georgetown, Garden Valley, and Cool. Equestrians depend on these mostly narrow, single-track trails to remain as safe trails for their use.

9. The Western States Trail in ASRA gets increased use by equestrians from outside the area, including from all states in the USA and many other countries, in months leading up to the Tevis Cup Ride every summer. These out of state and out of country tourists bring money to Placer County and they certainly don't anticipate having to confront bicycles on this famous hiking and riding trail. It would not work to have shared trails for these out of area riders.

10. The horse industry is a huge economic contributor to Auburn and surrounding areas. AECW in their mission statement supports the "recreation economy" of Auburn.

11. The Western States Trail between Foresthill and Francisco's (Ruck-a-Chucky) was built by horsemen for horsemen in order to get away from the urban development that was encroaching on the WST in Foresthill and Todd Valley.

12. Shared use would cut equestrian use by 50%.

Back Country Horsemen of America



PO Box 1367

Graham WA 98338-1367

360-832-2461 FAX 360-832-2471 Toll Free 1-888-893-5161
www.backcountryhorse.com

Position on Mountain Bike Use on the Public Lands Trail System

March 19, 2013

Philosophy

Historically our public lands trail system was shared by hikers and equestrians. Much of the existing system was in place by the mid-1900s – years before mountain bicycles became a popular recreational conveyance. Equestrian/hiking trails were traditionally managed for quiet, slow travel and the enjoyment of nature away from motorized and mechanical conveyances, including bicycles. Back Country Horsemen of America is dedicated to the preservation and protection of equestrian trails as an important resource to accommodate the needs of customary and traditional trail users.

Equestrian/hiking trails offer the best opportunity to design and manage sustainable trails that meet the unique needs of equestrians and provide them with the highest quality experiences. Multi-purpose or shared use trails, which address a variety of recreation needs, may accommodate both traditional users and mountain bicycles provided the trails are designed and managed for that use and protect the interest and safety of all users.

BCHA seeks to work cooperatively with mountain bicycle organizations, and encourages cooperative trail planning and stewardship at the local level between equestrians and bicyclists. Inherent in this spirit of cooperation is the recognition that the experience of equestrians must vigilantly be protected, whether on equestrian/hiker trails or multiple purposes trails suitable to equestrians.

Where the interests of equestrians cannot be guaranteed in a proposed trail system, at a minimum the network of historically-used equestrian trails must be incorporated and protected. Agency approval of mountain bike trails or trail systems should not come at the expense of horse use, nor should equestrians be relegated to a subset of a proposed trail system that consists primarily of graveled-surface road or former road beds.

BCHA encourages thorough dialogue regarding proposed trail systems between agency personnel, the horseback-riding community and other public land stakeholders. We are not opposed to agency

efforts to provide mountain biking opportunities; we view doing so as a positive development that contributes to expanding trail-based recreational opportunities. BCHA implores agencies to seek every opportunity to include the horseback-riding community in planning efforts for multi-use trails. It is our belief that only through strong partnerships and effective collaboration can the goal of creating sustainable and publicly-supported trail systems be achieved.

Position

BCHA supports the principle of managing trails for the primary purposes for which they were designed and constructed. Other uses and types of travel should be evaluated for their impact on, and compatibility with, the primary use and purpose of a given trail.

In issues involving local and state trails, BCHA typically defers to the local equestrian community. When requested to intervene, BCHA may assist on behalf of equestrians at large or intervene to mitigate conflict. In matters pertaining to federal land, BCHA may choose to speak on behalf of equestrians at large, particularly when matters may result in broad regional or national precedent.

BCHA opposes the use of mountain bicycles in designated wilderness and areas identified as suitable and recommended for wilderness through various agency planning processes.

Equestrian-Biker Trail Guidelines

Design characteristics. New trails should be designed to allow for safe passage of one traveler by another, and provide for adequate visibility to avoid collision or surprise encounters. Design should account for varying speeds of travel. For existing trails, equestrians and other users would benefit from evaluation of the need for vegetation clearing or rerouting to ensure adequate visibility. Yet equestrians recognize and accept that trails often contain tight switchbacks and/or less than ideal room for passage or line-of-sight. These shortcomings are inherent in any given trail or trail system and should not be used as rationale by an agency to exclude horse use.

Modifications to provide additional challenge for bicycles should be evaluated to determine that they will not create obstacles that force horses and mules off the managed tread resulting in unacceptable widening of the tread or parallel treads. The addition, removal or modification of tread drainage features, steps, bridges and other structures for bicycle use must consider the acceptability and accessibility of these changes to traditional users and the need for these features for protection of physical, biological and/or cultural resources.

The equestrian experience. Trails developed for multiple users should be designed with consideration given to the needs and concerns of traditional users and to minimize conflicts between bicycles and traditional users, particularly at higher levels of use and rates of speed.