

Subject: FW: Mt. Bicycles on Footpaths -- Not!

Date: Mon, 28 Feb 2005 07:45:26 -0800

From: "Ernie Crist" <ernie_crist@dnv.org>

To: <fonvca@fonvca.org>, <Cagebc@yahoo.com>, "Senior Management Committee" <managecomm@dnv.org>, "Susan Rogers" <Susan_Rogers@dnv.org>, "Richard Boulton" <Richard_Boulton@dnv.org>

From: Constance Berto [<mailto:c.berito@earthlink.net>]

Sent: Sunday, February 27, 2005 11:54 PM

To: Mayor and Council - DNV

Cc: James Ridge

Subject: Mt. Bicycles on Footpaths -- Not!

Dear Gentlepeople:

I have learned that your council is addressing the issue of allowing mountain bicycles on narrow trails and/or footpaths with other trail users. I would urge you to restrict bicyclists from this type of trail.

I live in Marin County, where the mountain bike was born some 25 years ago. Things have evolved to this point: what motor vehicles are to bicycles on roads, bicycles are to hikers, equestrians, and even other bicyclists, on trails. Bicyclists tend to focus on the trail directly in front of them and do not look ahead for others. The relative silence, and most especially the speed, of bicycles impose unacceptable safety hazards to other users on narrow trails. Modern technology, suspension systems, and durable components enable bicycles to reach downhill speeds that were unheard of ten years ago.

Here in Marin County, the environmental damage from bicycle wheels is easily evaluated. We see: skid marks up to 95 feet in length by measure; "eyebrows" on the side of slopes where bikes carom up and down; grasses, flowers, and vegetation flattened as though by a pizza cutter; roots exposed by countless skidding tires; water running down tracks left by wheels in softened dirt, eroding with every drop; deepening V-shaped grooves on slopes; thick dust on dry trails churned up by tires; posted regulations and other signs vandalized or destroyed. "Freerider" trails have been illegally built; tree limbs and saplings sawn, and fragile vegetation destroyed for the thrill of the tough ride.

The societal damage has been documented. Serious injury accidents due to collisions with bikes continue to mount. Deaths have been reported to horses and humans (including other bicyclists) because of speeding bikes. The elderly, the hard of hearing, equestrians, and families with young children have quietly given up on trails that mt. bikers frequent; they have been displaced because the safety, serenity, and tranquility of the outdoor experience has been destroyed. And yet, the mt. bikers complain that others are unwilling to "compromise" on trail use!


"Education" of mountain bikers has proved to be almost useless. In a celebrated local case three years ago, a prominent mountain biker on a county trails committee, who had been piously advocating for protecting the environment, was caught by national park rangers while he was hacking an illegal trail through pristine woods and convicted. IMBA and other groups have absolutely no control over their members once out on their bicycles. Peer pressure is minuscule or disregarded. Yes, one hopes that most bicyclists are courteous and considerate, but in our area, the two biggest problem groups given citations by rangers in all agencies are dog-walkers and renegade bicyclists. Hikers and equestrians are considered the groups most compliant with regulations.

Without question, bicyclists need places to ride. In some areas, special trails for bicycles only might be possible. There are places

where multiple use can be accommodated. That place is on paved bike paths with wide dirt shoulders, or on vehicular-width dirt roads, or on broad trails at least six feet wide. This way, there is room to move out of the way and sight-lines are usually adequate. Not all existing footpaths can be widened to such width because of environmental or economic constraints.

Lastly, I would like to point out that no one is disenfranchised by trail regulations. Every human being has the privilege of walking or hiking. It is only the bicycle or the horse that is restricted. If a trail is for hikers only, then the bicycle (or the horse) can be left at home.

I hope that the above will give you some basis for reaching your decision. You may forward this message to those who might benefit from reading it. Sincerely, Connie Berto, 70 Crane Drive, San Anselmo CA 94960.

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