

Elise Roberts
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North Vancouver

November 18, 2013

Agenda Item 5.1- Mr. Mark Wood, North Shore Mountain Bike Association

Dear Mayor and Council,

While I appreciate the NSMBA trail building initiatives, I continue to have concerns about our rainforest ecosystem. I do not support continued funding for the NSMBA. Instead, I strongly advocate that funding be allocated for environmental impact studies (particularly for small mammals and amphibians) in areas that have been negatively impacted by mountain bike trail building in collaboration with community environmental groups. I presented my concerns a few years ago with photographs. Yet these issues remain prominent, made clear by many of the images and comments I read on the various local mountain biking web sites. While I understand that DNV Parks has over 120 areas to manage, many more resources are needed to help protect our precious rainforest ecosystem and its important biodiversity. Attached is an interesting and helpful document on "Being Species at Risk Wise on the Trail," by the South Coast Conservation Program.

- The heavily used mountain bike trails are not *sustainable*, a word frequently used, because trails have to be repaired once or twice a year with all the rain. Re-alignment actually means a new trail. With approximately 40 trails on Fromme alone that means large crews going into the forest to dig approximately 4 times a month and that IS a lot of disturbance. Now consider all the other mountains on the North Shore, and the long term impact.
- To build new trails, 3 feet deep holes in the ground are dug for gold dirt, and new trail alignment areas through the understory are cut. When not refilled, the steep slopes on the sides can trap amphibians. In fact, this is one of the methods that biologist use to catch them.
- This constant re-routing and braiding of trails is widely known to disturb salamander habitat and fragment small mammal migratory and feeding areas.
- Old areas are replanted, but not with native plants that have been purchased, plants are dug up in one area and just replanted in another, creating even more disturbance.
- The organic top DUFF layer of soil is an essential component to a healthy forest. It contains everything from the rooting network of surrounding trees to important fungal networks and many invertebrates, so important to the food chain of birds and other animals that depend on them for food. Constant digging around trees can negatively impact these important relationships and dependencies between trees and fungi.
- Giant old downed rotting cedars that have more microscopic life in them than live trees and that are essential to soil health and biodiversity of the forest continue to be cut. I have seen areas where smaller live trees were cut instead of bringing in natural wooden construction materials.
- Last year I noticed that trail work happened right through bird nesting season.
- There was a recent image of a group building a structure over a small wetland and standing in it, compacting the soils.
- There is no enforcement of night riding and I still do not know whether this is permitted or not. The lights on the helmets are as bright as airplanes. Consider how this interrupts bats and other nocturnal mammals and birds.
- There are ample resources on the web site regarding how mountain bike trail building can put rare plants at risk.

- Who supervises these large groups when parks staff are not available and how familiar are they with these aforementioned issues?
- I'm concerned that the permit system is not consistent.
- Are people instructed what to do if they disturb salamander or small mammal nest? 1 photo was shown of a salamander in the glove of one of the trail builders, so what happened after that? Did they keep digging in that area? Are areas inspected for bird nests, salamander and mammal dens before the work begins?

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Research other types of materials and techniques for trail building that are more sustainable and that do not require digging large holes in the forest floor for gold dirt.
2. Bring in natural rock and wooden materials to use for trail building which eliminates the needs for digging and cutting into downed trees. Some jurisdictions prohibit the use of surrounding forest material to build trails. With all the funding from corporations why aren't funds being used to purchase natural materials instead?
3. Eliminate the need for transplanting understory plants by purchasing native plants. This no more puts the forest at risk of invasive plant seeds being accidentally carried in, than does the 100's of bike tires that come from elsewhere.
4. Initiate small mammal and ampibian studies in areas that have been impacted.
5. Improve permitting and supervision process by hiring more parks staff.
6. Improve enforcement of night riding (not just parking tickets).

Below is a recent image of a trail that was considered "sustainable."

Digger has been in throwing gold to fix some of the trouble spots where the loam has turned to mud. We knew this would occur with use.

New dirt takes time to set up but in the interim, considering the rain expected this wk, if everyone could give the trail a rest for a week it would be appreciated.

Cheers, Loam turns to mud.

MW



Please consider that mountain biking is only 1 activity for one demographic.

Thank you very much,

Elise Roberts



While this is well meaning, this is Arc'teryx "crew" of 60 people on Sat. Nov. 18th digging a **new** trail, the BOBSLED Re-route. Please look at how they are cutting through lush Salal understory. How many supervisors were they and what did they do with the Salal. Was it potted, re-planted?

