



## **PARK DISTRICT FRAMING: Neoma Lavalle**

### Planning for Conservation and Recreation:

Planning Process - 4 phases - Initiation (priorities, define project, assess, input), Develop Alternatives, Refine Alternatives (input and review), Final Plan / Alternative (formal adoption/approval by District Board)

Community/Stakeholder input in Phases 1, 3; input used to develop alternatives in Phase 2

Phases 2 and 3 may be repeated to ensure that project satisfies all impacted communities

After Phase 4, moves into other departments for implementation

Parklands - 125k acres, 37k in landbank; 25.4k special conservation status w/19k in landbank (legal status only, often for mitigation, doesn't dictate how District conserves)

Conservation Instruments - E. Contra Costa Habitat Conservation Plan, conservation, scenic and other protective easements  
Iterative process to clarify planning for conservation, consult with a variety of departments

Map of ECC HCP/NCCP Preserve Lands - ultimately 30k acres preserved; District will own majority of properties

Recreation on HCP Preserve Lands - requires Preserve Management Plan approved by agencies, guidelines in Conservation

Measure 1.5 - low intensity/impact recreation, limited off-trail use, new trail construction, bicycle use, amenities

New project being initiated: Garin to Pleasanton Ridge Regional Trail: fulfilling 2013 Master Plan priority for connecting Garin and Pleasanton Ridge - Chouinard Winery acquired, in process of initial assessment to balance dual mission: opening to public access and resource protection.

### **Comments:**

Is this the planning process for park lands in general or specifically for land banks? (Maybe they're the same.) - She's presenting the process for all projects that are planned, in new and old parks

The 2013 Master Plan is a setup for misinformation. Past experience - e.g. McCosker - shows that the devil is in the details regarding the stakeholder input process.

- McCosker was a great example of how this process considers input
- If the process used with McCosker is repeated, we have a problem.

What is 'AWS'? - District: Alameda Whipsnake

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### **Comments: (continued)**

Is the conservancy a county agency, a nonprofit, or...? - District: County agency; website is (<https://www.contracosta.ca.gov/depart/cd/water/HCP/index.html>).

- It was formed to facilitate the transfer of properties from private owners or land trusts to the park district, without having to do the legalities de novo each time.

- Brilliant idea. This winery acquisition is great, too

Which color is the winery property? larger than the star? - District: it is the star. relatively small property but an important connection

- And the gold and light gold are other private properties?

- District: Gold and light gold are land banked. previous acquisitions

Will the District continue to operate the winery? new form of user group? - District: Tempting.

Is the map of landbank lands just East Contra Costa? District: Yes.

- And the HCP and mitigation lands are distinct? District: All ECC lands are mitigation lands, all have been acquired for those purposes, but also conservation easements on specific lands.

- Thought they'd been transferred from Mt. Diablo. - District: No, those are separate from the HCP.

Easement doesn't mention dogs. - District: two properties in Clayton Ranch Area purchased from Save Mt. Diablo as HCP was being formed. Those properties subject to HCP guidelines. Easement is separate - rest subject to HCP and dog restrictions. Conversation to be continued offline - complicated, but lands in mitigation preserve land are still subject to overall property use rules.

Obviously, restrictions vary from property to property. Of the 19,000 acres with restrictions, how many cannot be opened to the public at all? - District: very few if any. There may be one conservation easement with no public access, otherwise open. Sometimes limited to existing roads or other limitations which are communicated.

- So of the 30k acres, almost all will be open to public and about half will have some varied restrictions? - District: Yes, correct.

## **PRESENTATION 1: Mimi Wilson / Regional Parks Association**

RPA's primary purpose since 1947 is protection of natural lands in East Bay

Board of 9 elected members - disseminate educational and scientific info to members and public, also keep an eye on District activities

2013 Master Plan seemed to imply "all trails for all users" - seemed justification for bike use in protected lands, lack of scientific research on wildlife disturbance - concern planted seeds of this committee

More discussion of trail safety concerns than concerns re conservation impacts of narrow trails and multi-use - talking today about values and stewardship - use lands as gently and respectfully as we can, enjoy natural world; trails allow all generations to do so, but by very nature are intrusions, so conservation must designate first steps

Need land study prior to planning, District must listen to all concerns

What we say today: listen all who enter, listen and respect, ensure happy trails for plant, wild and human life.

## **PRESENTATION 2: Norman LaForce / Sierra Club & Safe Trails, Environmental Protection (STEP)**

Conservation organizations support appropriate access for recreation consistent with protecting natural world

Mountain biking access challenges user experience; conflict caused in part by desire of mountain bikers for technically challenging trails

On behalf of Sierra Club and STEP, call for a process to find common ground, create solutions - TUWG should be making recommendations to Park Board

Questions to address:

What does mountain bike community really want?

New trails must go through legal Land Use Plan Amendment (LUPA) process with full environmental review - does District have funds for LUPA and increased costs that will accompany new bike trails?

Stewardship must evaluate habitat areas prior to considering new trails

Idea that engineering can resolve user conflict is not a solution - 3 E's (Engineering, Education, Enforcement) don't consider the other 2 E's: environmental impact and user experience.

Goal of Sierra Club and STEP is to get a consensus on solutions to recommend to the Park Board that can work for foreseeable future, not engender continued conflict and associated resource expenditures.

## **PRESENTATION 2: Norman LaForce / Sierra Club & Safe Trails, Environmental Protection (STEP)**

### **Comments**

the outline bike presentation did not reflect any of what Norm claims they want

The presentations we have seen do not usually reflect the back-channel discussions interest groups are having with park district staff. - District: There are no back channel discussions with park district staff. Park District staff hear regularly from all stakeholders.

STEP should stop claiming, as has Amelia, that she or they represent Metropolitan Horseman's Association - MHA voted in 2017 to affiliate with STEP.

And the current and previous President both have denied that group affiliation, and support a collaborative approach  
Morris and Gary should get the approval of the TWHA board, who apparently have not signed off on the positions being taken here.

in fact TWHA has authorized Gary to represent them. I am not a rep of any group per se

The biking perspective communicated that there are a range of experiences desired by mountain bikers. It is not all advanced features and extreme sports.

## **PRESENTATION 3: Pam Young / Golden Gate Audubon Society**

Trails do automatically have an impact

Is Mountain Biking an Extreme Sport? - some derivatives are considered to be so and lack respect for natural environment.

Impacts even more profound when unauthorized trails are used

Extreme sports don't belong in East Bay parks

Tilden Nature Area - has illegal track marks on several trails - bird species decimated by impacts; have witnessed bike racing - new "no bikes" signs on trails.

Over 40 illegal mountain bike trails showing tremendous damage to trails and creek

Causes habitat fragmentation, cuts biodiversity and increase fire risk

Mountain bike night riding severely disturbs wildlife

Speed limits exceeded on South Park drive - even some mountain bikers concerned

These activities have both direct and cumulative impacts on plants, soil and wildlife. Mountain biking considered single greatest threat to wildlife habitat integrity per some biologists.

Proposed strategies: can protect high value habitats, restrict mountain biking to approved trails, required orientation and education, establish regular enforcement patrols, study impacts and exclude damaged trails, increase fines and apply proceeds to restore damaged trails, exclude repeat offenders / require permits

## **PRESENTATION 4: Jim Hanson / California Native Plant Society**

Managing the narrow trail: what we're hearing, what we're seeing, how to manage for multiple uses? (the 2 E's)

What we're hearing: rising mountain biking, trail walking popularity (including hiking, running, dog walking, combined with equestrians)

That multi-use can be expanded with alternative uses, clear sight lines, engineering alterations - can manage multi-use on narrow trails through Engineering, Education & Enforcement

Where are the 2 E's? Park Natural Environmental and Trail User Experience - different uses have differing impacts; group considers these:

Park Natural Environment: sensitive roots of trees, trail conditions, native flora, erosion - impacts and damage caused by multi-use, also illegal / unpermitted uses

Managing for trail user experience - safe and satisfying, emphasize what actual trail users have said they favor: park use rising in general, major use continues to be hikers, walkers, assisted trail users, runners and joggers, dog walkers

Mountain biking has been roughly same proportion of trail use and has access to 25% of natural surface narrow trails, with access to 88% of park trails (including fire roads, paved, unpaved) - District doing a good job of serving all users - youth would like some technical trails

User experience starting point of anything we do.

Design system-wide with evaluation of park natural resource areas. Anything we do affects both existing park and land bank areas.

A safe and satisfying trail experience doesn't include being on alert for mountain bikes

All trail types increasing in popularity - youth want technical trails which are tough to combine

In sum, in talking about Park narrow trail policies, include 2 E's from the start

### **Comments**

Trail on right is a poorly designed trail (comment on photo showing damage on multi-use trail with mountain biking, equestrians)

I hope before TUWG wraps up, the park district can share how good trails are designed and engineered

It appears in these presentations that cycling use is heavy as well.

Crockett Hills is the only park with a significant amount of narrow trail access to bikes. The rest are very small sections with limited mileage in any one park.

erosion and 'braided' trails are the consequence of poor original design and lack of maintenance, and are present in all parks, regardless of usage

Lafayette Reservoir has timed use for bicycles- how has that experience been for EBMUD?

It is not just youth that would like more technical trails

Thank you, Jim Hanson, for your balanced perspective

## GROUP COMMENTS

It's easy to blame any one user group for trail damage, but it's apparent that most trails were not originally designed as trails but as ranch roads; not designed with maintenance in mind. Results: erosion a huge issue on all trails, common in many parks as are too-steep trails. Predates mountain biking, have been gullies on trails since long before. Trail runners deliberately run in creek when trails are wet, so they won't slip in mud - deliberately ignoring impacts. Equestrians and hikers also impact trails, hikers probably most as dominant users. Key is to encourage use without causing impacts.

Made clear that extreme sports are not all that cyclists are looking for. Many like connectivity, core of experience is enjoying nature which is also part of conservation value. Presentation painted a very small segment. Also - heavy restrictions now in effect don't seem to be working. Not practical to prevent impacts just through restriction and enforcement - best solution to create trails for specific uses.

Disappointed in this round of presentations. Framing didn't provide broad understanding of conservation viewpoint but focused on blaming bikers. Also felt Norman should have addressed his editorial. Also, walkers, hikers, runners and equestrians all have impacts. Even restricted trails have seen a heavy impact. Need to consider how we become solution-oriented. Each group is learning about different negative impacts - need to frame things to work together to solve issues. Thank you, agreed. Also, these presentations were intended to get perspective of these groups. As representative and walker, hiker, as well as mountain biker, felt criticized - but last slide in Pam's presentation showed all things to consider - photos of actual sites helped us understand. As mountain biker, don't condone destroying habitat. Liked Jim's presentation that pointed out different situations and needs. Liked discussion of 2 E's. Suggest we take big map with all lands and look at what we have, where there are restrictions, connections we're trying to make, where demand is for different uses - where are opportunities, populations served, needs, opportunities and constraints as we move forward into design

## GROUP COMMENTS (continued)

I think the elephant in the room is that we can have a planning process, signage, timed use, other rules, but in fact these areas are refreshingly wild and uncontrolled, so no matter what is decided there will be a population that is ignorant of or ignores the rules.

To me, this all supports that we need more trails, big-time. If everyone is squeezed onto the same limited trails, there are more conflicts and more impacts.

- This is like the old idea that if you build more freeways, there will be less density. But unless you are far from the urban centers, more trails does not seem to reduce density. A pilot program should be considered so that this could be measured.

- Building freeways was about reducing gridlock. If we have more trails, we're not going to suddenly have X times the park users.

- We have gridlock on Sundays in a number of parks, in my experience...

- Exactly. That's why user groups need ways to spread out

Is this the 2020 Trail Survey that shows the types of trail use? It is a shame that it does not show equestrian use also! <https://www.ebparks.org/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?blobid=33664>

increase park use because no charge at the booth. we need to keep the ticket booth operating especially during closing hours not just mornings.

We need to get the new parks open, so that the people who live there have alternatives to crowding existing parks. same is true of narrow trails. find more trails that they can ride, and there will be less impact on a few

People will continue to gravitate to their neighborhood parks. There may be a role for specialized trails to be provided, but stewardship considerations should be foremost. The park district must balance conservation and recreation.

Landscape planning and distribution of opportunities is an important consideration

We should look at how populations have grown, too. (The park district board is doing that exercise right now, looking at how Wards may need to be redrawn.)

Equestrian demand will be highest in new parks with stables nearby

## BREAKOUT GROUP DISCUSSIONS

1. What assumptions do you think are important for the District to consider in developing new trails?
2. What ideas do you have for promoting conservation goals and minimizing the impacts of trail use?

### GROUP 1: Reporter - Luana Espana

Group had a variety of viewpoints

#### **Assumptions:**

Understanding demand in new parks will take pressure off parks that are heavily impacted

Need for relief from overcrowding; develop trails to spread people out

Narrow trails debate re openness to bikes

In future, when developing new trails - opportunity to consider and design trails for multi-use

Planning - ensure environmentalists included from beginning

Equity is important - build new trails in areas with limited access to recreational experiences

Look at what's available nearby when developing new trails - e.g., develop equestrian trails where there are stables nearby

Look at demographic growth and shift and consider in development

Consider access for youth who ride bikes and individuals without cars - more inclusive of less-resourced communities

If bikes allowed on narrow trails in new parklands - should other trails be closed to bikes?

#### **Other comments:**

Trail work could be a requirement to participate in trail events such as races

Permitting process for certain types of events might require volunteer work rather than permit fee

Create adopt-a-trail program - users have ownership, can call groups to notify about trail conditions



## **BREAKOUT GROUP DISCUSSIONS (continued)**

### **GROUP 2: Reporter - Mary Barnsdale**

Group had a complete range of perspectives

#### **Assumptions:**

Human presence impact needs to be managed, need studies funded

Parks are for people as well as plants and wildlife

Need to look at trails in more granular fashion

Devil in details; need to balance all needs

Who makes that call? The Board does - how closely do trail planners work with stewardship? Very closely, not a competition

#### **Needs:**

Thorough evaluation, data on why trails eroding

Disagreed about need for new trails to be built

Pilots - new areas to open - maybe build out a few pilot trails and study how they work

When planners consider an area, tendency to silo the viewpoint and limit task to boundaries, but must consider where it connects and what impacts users might have on connected areas and trails. Needs to be a systemic, overall rather than siloed view of planning

### **GROUP 3: Reporter - Kathy Roth**

#### **Assumptions:**

Main goal to preserve environment, minimize impact of new trails - some areas more sensitive than others

Providing recreation is important and valid

Land banks have connection to existing parks

Range of valid opportunities - all trails have impacts, make limitations clear

Population growth and changes to be considered

#### **Ideas:**

In trail design, consider making off-limits areas less attractive

Consider sight lines, minimize grading

Consider alternate use days - challenges, will lessen conflict but not issues

Ranch roads not ideal - may remove them but they're also important for access

Generally in agreement re. basic goals but devil is in the details

## **BREAKOUT GROUP DISCUSSIONS (continued)**

### **GROUP 4: Reporter - Norman LaForce**

#### **Assumptions:**

Parks, trails, properties are a limited resource, need to handle that in terms of user capacity or rotating park openings / closings as over-capacity is reached

Identify future trends and how to respond

Protecting wildlife values and habitat is important, connectivity of trails is important too but needs to be put in this context

Enforcement and education is an important component

#### **Ideas:**

Look at enforcement, education for protecting wildlife values

Use Marin County process model for creating more parks with more consensus building

Look at impacts in the context of having a limited resource, prioritize stewardship - identify key elements of protecting wildlife habitat

### **GROUP 5: Reporter - Helen Burke**

#### **Assumptions:**

Multiple viewpoints need to be considered, one view shouldn't dominate

There will be competing interests and resources - District needs to emphasize communication and planning

Can't design trail for every use

Important for people to spend time in different places and learn

Will be more people using parks - there will be a learning curve

Increased use means additional development, maintenance funding

Expect the unexpected (natural disasters, etc.)

Assumption that maintaining parks properly, that management is with best intent and science

#### **Ideas:**

Start with looking at land on large map, noting environmentally sensitive areas

Portfolios of multi-use and single-use trails

Education and communication are important

District needs to do more enforcement, requires more resources but necessary

Technology can address cost-effectiveness

Rogue trails created at night - night vision cameras for evidence

Mountain biker patrols

## **BREAKOUT GROUP DISCUSSIONS (continued)**

### **GROUP COMMENTS**

Thank you everyone for the excellent discussion. I want to note that the Bay Area Ridge Trail is pro-sustainable trails. Built to minimize and avoid resource impacts and built for all users, where it makes sense. Thank you for the excellent presentations on the development process East Bay Staff!

Recommendation that America institute draft for every citizen to be a park ranger - at least have YouTube channel for park ranger stories - will work as recruiting and retention device, create excitement - get out view on what it's like to manage parks

### **MISC. COMMENTS**

Thanks to open minds, consensus seems reachable right now.

### **FUTURE MEETINGS**

July 15

August 5

Final meeting: September 16 (Yom Kippur - let Devan know if rescheduling is needed)

### **MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS**

All added to mailing list for Roddy Ranch planning efforts. First public meeting coming up in July, group will have received email.